

MOLDOVA VERSUS RUSSIAN HYBRID THREAT:
A QUESTION OF NATIONAL WILL

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ABSTRACT

MOLDOVA VERSUS RUSSIAN HYBRID THREAT: A QUESTION OF NATIONAL WILL, by LTC Sergiu Cirimpei, 121 pages.

The Republic of Moldova may face a situation similar to the one Ukraine is facing—a Russian hybrid threat. Elements of such a threat are already present in Moldova. This study argues that the Republic of Moldova can and must prepare to successfully oppose a Russia supported hybrid threat.

The paper first describes the threat. It then analyzes the current situation in the Republic of Moldova using a PMESII framework in order to identify if current conditions favor a successful opposition of a potential Russia supported hybrid threat. The paper also examines, using counterinsurgency theories, if there are conditions in Moldova that could favor development of an insurgency as part of the overall hybrid threat. As the research identifies, there are both advantages and disadvantages for the Republic of Moldova in regards to preventing or addressing a potential Russia supported hybrid threat. The disadvantages are numerous and they are significant. The greatest disadvantage is the political and societal polarization of the population. This then drives lack of national consensus, corruption, indecisiveness, extensive reliance on partners and international community, political focus on winning popularity, and ultimately affect the national security. However, as the paper ascertains, Russia's lack of direct access to Moldova is a great advantage and increases Moldova's probability for success.

The research identifies that the current situation is complicated, dangerous, and requires an immediate whole-of-government approach. The conclusion is that the Republic of Moldova can successfully oppose a Russia supported hybrid threat *only if* it improves its current situation. By fixing the current situation, Moldova will obtain the national will to oppose a potential Russia supported hybrid threat.

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ACRONYMS

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DIME	Diplomatic, Informational, Military, Economic instruments of National Power
GUUAM	Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Armenia
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MSSR	Moldova Soviet Socialist Republic
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NMS	National Military Strategy
NSC	National Security Concept
NSS	National Security Strategy
PCRM	Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova
PDM	Democratic Party of the Republic of Moldova
PL	Liberal Party of the Republic of Moldova
PLDM	Liberal Democratic Party of the Republic of Moldova
PMESII	Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, Infrastructure
PSRM	Socialist Party of the Republic of Moldova
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

If the political aims are small, the motives slight and tensions low, a prudent general may look for any way to avoid major crises and decisive actions, exploit any weaknesses in the opponent's military and political strategy, and finally reach a peaceful settlement. If his assumptions are sound and promise success we are not entitled to criticize him. But he must never forget that he is moving on devious paths where the god of war may catch him unawares. He must always keep an eye on his opponent so that he does not, if the latter has taken up a sharp sword, approach him armed only with an ornamental rapier.

— Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*

Problem overview

The Republic of Moldova may face a situation similar to the one Ukraine is facing—a Russian hybrid threat. As the Commander of the United States European Command and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, General Philip Breedlove stated, “Russia appears to be following some of the same ‘hybrid warfare’ script in dealing with the Republic of Moldova that it used before annexing Crimea and intervening in Eastern Ukraine.”¹ Indicators of initial steps are already developing: in the North, the Russian minorities have voiced a willingness to conduct a referendum for autonomy; in the South, the already autonomous Gagauz minorities conducted a referendum in February 2015 and voted in favor of integration with the Russia-led Eurasian Custom Union. Furthermore, the “Operational Group of Russian Forces” is illegally located in the Transnistria separatist region. These Russian forces, if paired with the Transnistria military, appear to

¹ Voice of America, “Top NATO commander questions Russian intentions toward Moldova,” accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-nato-breedlove-russian-intentions-moldova/2451080.html>.

exceed the numbers of the Republic of Moldova's National Army. Analysts consider Transnistria as the main security threat for Moldova and also Russia's strongest leverage to influence the Republic of Moldova to make it amenable to Russia's interests.²

According to the Department of Defense analyst Daniel Dewit, "Putin and his supporters believe that the former Soviet states constitute a region of Russian 'privileged interest,' where Russia should retain special rights and political influence, regardless of the desires of the independent peoples in each of these states."³ The Republic of Moldova is one of those ex-Soviet countries that falls within this category. Furthermore, throughout history Russia at numerous times has displayed an interest towards controlling Moldova. Russia tried to export its patrimonial authoritarianism to Moldova in a form of so called transimperialism.⁴ It consists of empowering authoritarian leaders in order to make them amenable to Russia's interests.

Previously the Republic of Moldova has been slow in identifying similar Russian hybrid threats, posed by Gagauzia and Transnistria in the 1990s. As general Costas

² Laura Kirvelyte, "Moldova's Security Strategy: the Problem of Permanent Neutrality," accessed December 15, 2015, http://www.lka.lt/en/research/lithuanian-annual-strategicreview_590.html, 165.

³ Daniel Dewit, "The Inauguration of 21st Century Political Warfare: A Strategy for Countering Russian Non-Linear Warfare Capabilities," *Small Wars Journal* (November 15, 2015), accessed November 21, 2015, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-inauguration-of-21st-century-political-warfare-a-strategy-for-countering-russian-non-li>.

⁴ Celeste A. Wallander, "Russian Transimperialism and its Implications," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (2007): 107-122, DOI: 10.1162/wash.2007.30.2.107.

mentioned, “Unfortunately, Chisinau identified too late the separatist development in the South, and did not take any action, not even diplomatic.”⁵

This paper argues that the Republic of Moldova can and must prepare to successfully oppose a potential Russian hybrid threat. The Russian Federation has started a trend which it is unlikely to reverse any time soon.⁶ Whether or not Moldova can effectively oppose a potential hybrid threat depends on numerous factors analyzed in the research; the most important of them is its’ national will to resist a potential Russian hybrid threat.

Primary and secondary research questions

The primary question is:

Can Moldova successfully oppose a Russia supported hybrid threat?

The secondary questions are:

1. What are the elements that could constitute a hybrid threat to the Republic of Moldova?
2. Does the current situation make Moldova vulnerable to a potential hybrid threat?
3. Is there a potential for development of an insurgency as part of the overall hybrid threat?

⁵ Ion Costas, *Transnistria 1989-1992: Cronica unui razboi nedecarat* (Bucuresti: Editura RAO, 2012), 131.

⁶ James Q. Roberts, “*Maskirovka 2.0: Hybrid Threat, Hybrid Response*,” Joint Special Operations Press Occasional Paper, accessed January 15, 2016, http://jsou.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=17566484, 5.

4. How is neutrality affecting Moldova's defense capability?
5. What advantages does Moldova have in response to a potential hybrid threat?

Assumptions

The following assumptions are relevant and appear to be valid:

1. Russia currently poses a hybrid threat to the Republic of Moldova. This threat will be in effect at least for the next 8–10 years.

It is an assumption supported by numerous historical data, as well as by the current activities in the Republic of Moldova. These activities indicate the presence of a potential hybrid threat. The separatist region of Transnistria has its own armed forces. Russian forces are also stationed in Transnistria, contrary to the Russian Federation commitments, made at the 1999 OSCE summit at Istanbul, to withdraw those forces.⁷ It appears that Russia has an interest to keep and fund those forces in Moldova. This assumption is further analyzed through follow on research.

2. Neither Europe nor the US will significantly impede a potential Russian hybrid threat against the Republic of Moldova.

This assumption is hard to confirm but easy to deduce from the West's reactions to Russia's operations in Georgia 2008 and currently Ukraine. Although it may appear as a fallacy of generalization, numerous studies indicate that this assumption is likely to be true. Moldova's neutrality has implications that further make this assumption appear valid. Moldova's neutrality may be an additional obstacle as described in this paper. This

⁷ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, *National Security Concept (2008)*, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://lex.justice.md/md/328010>.

assumption implies that Moldova must prepare to defend itself primarily relying on own capabilities.

3. Ukraine will not allow Russian Forces to transit its territory to the Republic of Moldova.

According to the current situation, this assumption is likely to be valid. Currently, Ukraine does not allow Russia to transit its territory and it does not appear that Ukraine will change its approach. Ukraine's attitude is extremely important to the Republic of Moldova in case of a hybrid threat, given the fact that Russian Federation has no borders or other access to the Republic of Moldova, to include the Transnistria region.

Definitions of Key Terms

Hybrid Threat–“is the diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, and/or criminal elements all unified to achieve mutually benefitting effects.”⁸

Inner core states–“an advanced country that shares common national values and generally dominate world politics. Most conflict with global consequences will involve the core states in some fashion or another.”⁹

Neutrality– “the quality of state of not supporting either side in an argument, fight, war, etc.; the quality of state of being neutral.”¹⁰ The Republic of Moldova proclaimed its permanent neutrality in the Constitution, Article 11. It is not clearly

⁸ US Department of the Army, TC 7-100, *Hybrid Threat* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, November 2010), v.

⁹ Ibid., 2-1.

¹⁰ Merriam-Webster, “Neutrality” (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2008), 1087.

defined in the Republic of Moldova's strategic documents, neither was it recognized officially at the international level. However, according to the Article 11 of the Constitution, the Republic of Moldova does not accept foreign forces to be stationed on its territory.

Limitations

This study focuses on the current situation and the effectiveness of Moldova's efforts concerning opposition of a potential hybrid threat. It explains whether or not the current situation favors or discourages a potential hybrid threat. The research also describes if there are conditions for an insurgency to develop, as part of the hybrid threat.

Delimitations

The paper does not provide any solution to the problem, nor does it propose very specific and narrow approaches to the issue. Such proposals and solutions are subject to further researches and require detailed expertise in specific areas.

Summary

This thesis tries to reveal the feasibility of Moldova opposing a Russia supported hybrid threat. The objective is not to find a clear "win" or "lose" answer to the question. The point is to analyze the current situation, the efforts that the Republic of Moldova is making to secure itself, as well as reveal whether or not the Republic of Moldova can defend itself against a Russia supported hybrid threat.

It is obvious that a country like the Republic of Moldova, with all its political, social, and financial problems will find many challenges when preparing to confront an insurgency/ hybrid threat supported by a much stronger nation state. However, it does not

mean that the Republic of Moldova should disregard its security needs. Moldova should do its best to clearly state its end state, find the optimal approach, and work towards achieving it.

CHAPTER 2

MOLDOVA IN CONTEXT

In order to better understand whether or not the Republic of Moldova can or cannot oppose a potential Russian hybrid threat, it is important to provide basic information related to the Republic of Moldova's geography and history. This chapter briefly explains the main geographical and historical considerations. Geography and history have a direct implication on the problem and both these factors shape the current conditions to a significant extent.

Geography

The Republic of Moldova is located in Europe, North-West of the Black Sea (47 00 N, 29 00 E). It has an area of 33,851 square kilometers. Moldova borders with Romania in the West and with Ukraine in the North, East, and South. There are two main rivers—Prut and Nistru. Both of them run North to South. The Prut River, in the West, is the physical boundary between the Republic of Moldova and Romania. The Nistru River, in the East is the physical obstacle between the majority of the Moldova territory (on the West bank) and the Transnistria separatist region (on the East bank).

The Republic of Moldova became a landlocked country after its annexation by the Soviet Union on June 28, 1940. The Southern part of Moldova, which was also the access to the Black Sea, along with Bucovina in the North was given to Ukraine in an attempt to reduce Moldova's strategic importance. Moldova's geographical location, just North of the Black Sea between the Balkan Peninsula and the Eastern part of the Eurasian

landmass, made Moldova a target for diverse invaders throughout history. Some of these invaders had a significant impact on Moldova in general and on its' identity specifically.



Figure 1. Map of the Republic of Moldova

Source: CIA World Factbook, “Europe: Moldova,” accessed January 15, 2016, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/md.html>.

History

The history of the Republic of Moldova is very complex. Moldova was initially formed in 1359. It unified with Romanian principalities for the first time in 1600. For the purpose of this paper, the brief historical analysis comprises the period from 1812 to present.

In 1812, as a result of the 1806-1812 Russian–Turkish war, the Russian Empire annexed a part of Moldova in the Bucharest Treaty of 1812 and gave it the name of Bessarabia. This annexation initiated the Slavic influence.¹¹ In the 19th and early 20th centuries Russia, under the Alexander III and Nicolai II, began an aggressive “Russification” process of its territories.¹² The purpose of “Russification” was to influence the population that came under the Russian Empire control in order to affect people’s’ believes about ethnicity, culture, language in a positive way towards Russia and thus increase Russia’s legitimacy in those regions and prevent potential rebellions. As described in the following chapters, this process had a high degree of success in the Republic of Moldova.

With the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, a new phase in Moldova’s history started. Vladimir Lenin had a different perspective from the view of the Russian Empire on foreign policy. He called Russia a “prison house of nations,”¹³ and intended to make

¹¹ Keith A. Barclay, “Ethnic Violence in Moldova” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2002), 14.

¹² Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE/CQ Press, 2014), 158.

¹³ Ibid.

peace with everybody, while trying to use ideology in order to spread the revolution. In his “scientific socialist” view, the peace would be without annexations or incorporations, while each state would have the right of self-determination.¹⁴ Consequently, after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, Bessarabia reunified with Romania.



Figure 2. Moldova unification with Romania in 1918

Source: A1 News, “*Evolutia Teritoriala a Romaniei*,” accessed January 15, 2016, <http://a1.ro/news/politic/foto-vezi-evolutia-teritoriala-a-romaniei-de-la-mihai-viteazul-pana-azi-id26738.html>.

However, when Joseph Stalin came into power, he changed the perspective on the USSR foreign policy. He had a “revolutionary-imperial paradigm,” which meant that the Soviet Union had the right over ex-tsarist Russia’ possessions while at the same time

¹⁴ Gvosdev and Marsh, 19.

desired to spread the Communist ideology around the world.¹⁵ Since a part of Moldova (Bessarabia) had previously been incorporated by the Russian Empire, the chances to remain part of Romania lessened as time went on and the Soviet Union gained strength.

Following the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between the USSR and Germany, the part of Moldova known as Bessarabia, was to become part of the USSR. The Soviets forwarded an ultimatum to Romania on June 26, 1940 asking Romania to abandon Bessarabia. After the Romanian troops withdrew two days later, the USSR annexed Bessarabia and on August 2, 1940 the part of Moldova under the Soviet control became the Moldova Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR).¹⁶

From 1940 to 1991, the Republic of Moldova was part of the Soviet Union, with a brief exception during World War II when Soviets had retreated East and the MSSR became again part of Romania. Article 72 of the USSR constitution allowed republics to secede from the USSR.¹⁷ However, neither Moldova nor other Soviet republics attempted to initiate this procedure. Consequently, Moldova remained part of the Soviet Union until 1991. Mikhail Gorbachev, after coming to power, tried to break out of Stalin's "revolutionary-imperial paradigm" and diminish confrontation with the West.¹⁸ He wanted to improve relations with the U.S. and with the European Countries. At the same time, Moldova was determined to regain its independence. When in March 1991 Mikhail

¹⁵ Gvosdev and Marsh, 19.

¹⁶ Barclay, 16-17.

¹⁷ Gvosdev and Marsh, 160.

¹⁸ Ibid., 20.

Gorbachev conducted a referendum to identify whether or not the Soviet Union should continue to exist, Moldova boycotted the referendum, making it clear it wanted independence.¹⁹ As a consequence, the Soviet Republics and other countries in Eastern Europe achieved a de-facto independence. The Republic of Moldova became independent on August 27, 1991.

However, the newly formed Republic of Moldova could not break completely with the Russian Federation because of the strong economic and cultural ties created with the other ex-Soviet Republics. On December 21, 1991 at Almaty in Kazakhstan, Moldova became part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).²⁰ This was an organization created during the collapse of the Soviet Union, mainly designed to continue the collaboration among ex-Soviet republics in trade, combatting crime, and finance. However, the Republic of Moldova never became part of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). This organization prohibited the participating nations from joining other alliances. CSTO also set the ground for security cooperation and collective defense exclusively between the participating nations.

After the Republic of Moldova declared its independence in 1991, Russia initiated the “Transnistria War” in order to control Moldova and prevent its potential reunification with Romania.²¹ Then, Russia established its peace keepers in Moldova. This frozen

¹⁹ Gvosdev and Marsh, 163.

²⁰ Ibid., 164.

²¹ Laura Kirvelyte, “Moldova's Security Strategy: the Problem of Permanent Neutrality,” accessed December 15, 2015, http://www.lka.lt/en/research/lithuanian-annual-strategicreview_590.html.

conflict modus operandi represents a strategy widely used by the Russian Federation in other ex-Soviet countries, including Azerbaijan, Georgia, and now Ukraine. Russia's method of stopping conflict while at the same time supporting the separatism represents a frozen conflict approach.²² In an attempt to prove its peace-keeping effectiveness, Russia in 2003 proposed to Moldova the "Kozak" plan for solving the Transnistria problem.²³ According to this plan, Transnistria would remain part of the Moldova *Federation* but it would have the choice to become independent in the case that Moldova would ever reunify with Romania. However, at the last minute the Republic of Moldova refused to sign the plan.

In an attempt to diminish Russian influence and promote economic and security cooperation, the Republic of Moldova became part of GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Armenia) Organization for Democracy and Economic Development in 2001.²⁴ This organization proved itself inefficient, especially during the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, when Ukrainian ships did not interfere with the Russian operation.²⁵ Its further impotence came out during the Russian aggression in Ukraine in 2014.

²² Gvosdev and Marsh, 174.

²³ Ibid., 175.

²⁴ Ibid., 170.

²⁵ Ibid., 171.

Introduction to current situation

The Republic of Moldova has made efforts to strengthen its security sector in order to address the Russian threat. Security is addressed in most of the national level documents. For instance, the National Security Concept states that Transnistria along with Russia's military in the region are a threat to the Republic of Moldova's security and can be the cause of future conventional and non-conventional threats.²⁶ In order to address the situation, in July 2005, Moldova's Parliament passed Law Nr. 173, which would grant Transnistria a special legal status in case of a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Furthermore, Moldova tried to solve the problems in the Gagauz region by granting large autonomy to the region.²⁷ The Gagauz region is very active in promoting an anti-European narrative. This implies that even if Transnistria becomes autonomous, its attitude towards Moldova's foreign vectors will not change. Therefore, the efforts that the Republic of Moldova has made to address the minority situation were not effective.

²⁶ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, *National Security Concept* (2008).

²⁷ Costas, 127.

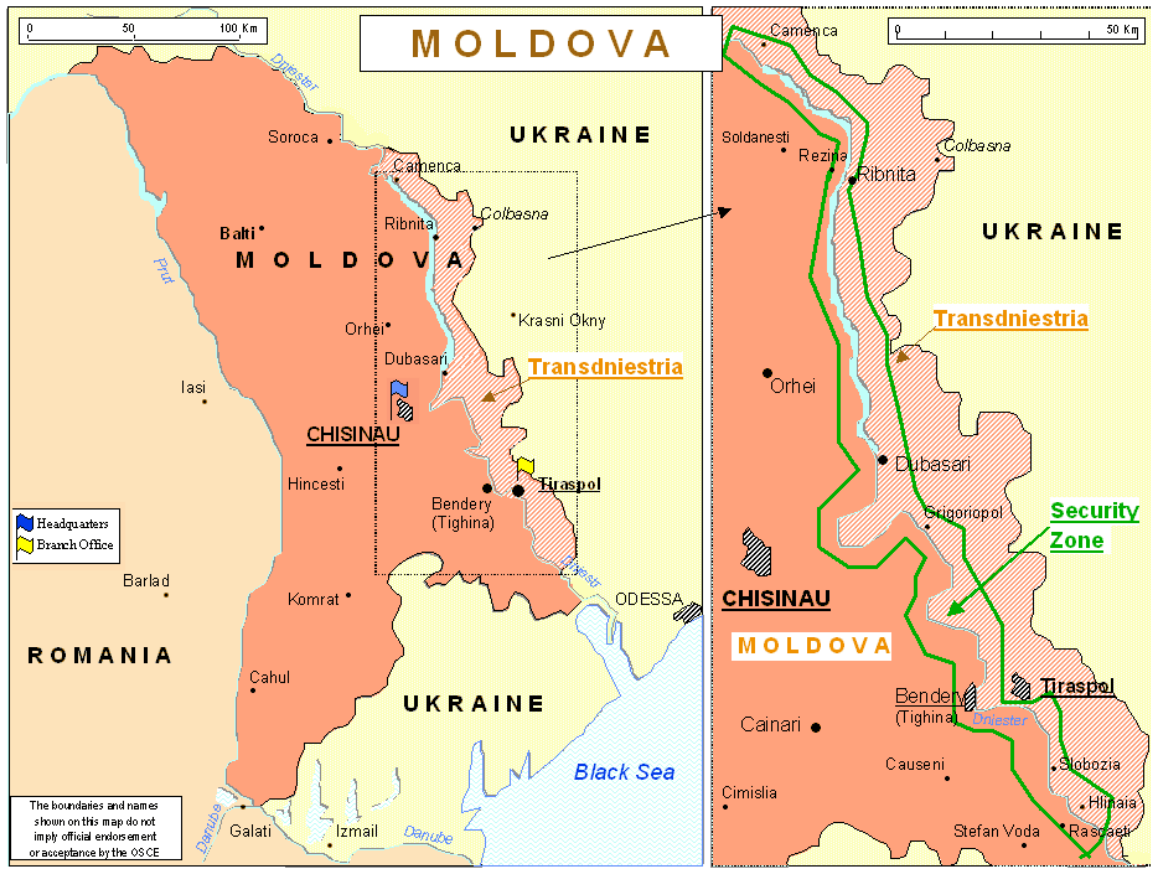


Figure 3. Transnistria Separatist Region

Source: FAS, “Russian Military Districts,” accessed March 20, 2016, <http://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/agency/mo-md.htm>.

Furthermore, the Republic of Moldova is a neutral country. Even if Moldova’s Declaration of Independence does not mention neutrality and no other country guaranteed Moldova’s neutrality, Article 11 of the Republic of Moldova’s Constitution declares the permanent neutrality of the country.²⁸ In broad terms this means that Moldova cannot be part of any alliance and therefore it is safe to assume that the Republic of Moldova must

²⁸ Kirvelyte.

rely on its own capabilities to defend itself. Moreover, the only state that currently violates the Republic of Moldova's neutrality is the Russian Federation, which failed to withdraw its troops from the Eastern region of the country, despite agreeing to do so in Istanbul at the 1999 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) summit. This is a strong indicator that constitutional neutrality has not proven itself successful as a security strategy. Despite Moldova's neutrality, the Russian Federation has forces on Moldova's territory and appears to be unwilling to withdraw them in the near future.

The Republic of Moldova has made efforts to address the potential Russian hybrid threat. The following political, military, economic, social, information, and infrastructure (PMESII) analysis of the country explains both the strengths and weaknesses of how Moldova prepares to oppose a potential Russian hybrid threat. The political situation in the country is uncertain. The Parliament is polarized. At this writing, the Alliance for a European Moldova has only nine more seats in the Parliament than the opposition does.²⁹ The Parliament voted a motion of no-confidence for the Government.

Furthermore, because of Moldova's neutrality, the national authorities have not been exposed to security issues or complexities. The Information and Communication Strategy of the Republic of Moldova identified as a vulnerability the fact that national authorities have insufficient education in security or defense issues.³⁰ The lack of such

²⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Moldova," World Factbook, accessed December 1, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/md.htm>.

³⁰ Government of the Republic of Moldova, *National Security Information and Communication Strategy of the Republic of Moldova (2012)*, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=344342&lang=1>.

education makes it difficult for the national authorities to take correct and timely decisions. The same document states that there is a delay in passing strategic documents. Overall the political situation in the Republic of Moldova is not very stable and thus negatively influences the country's capabilities to address Russian hybrid threat.

The Republic of Moldova's National Army has the mission to ensure the security of the country.³¹ Numerous efforts have been made by the National Army and by foreign partners to increase the Army's defense and peace-keeping capabilities. However, given the difficult economic situation of the country and the very low percentage of GDP spent on the Moldovan military (0.3 percent of GDP),³² the modernization process is slow. Despite the Ministry of Defense's insistence, the defense budget did not significantly increase even after the conflict in Ukraine had started.³³ With such funding, the National Army found it difficult to conduct recapitalization, appropriate upgrading, and adequate maintenance of its equipment inherited from the Soviet Union. Consequently, the Army did not innovate and developed as it should have.

The Republic of Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe. The country's GDP estimated for 2014 was only 17.78 billion.³⁴ The Information and Communication Strategy of the Republic of Moldova identifies the economic deficiencies of the country

³¹ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova* (2011), accessed December 1, 2015, <http://lex.justice.md/md/md/340510/>.

³² Central Intelligence Agency, "Moldova."

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

as a threat to its national security. The second and third order effects influence all sectors of the country, to include security sector. Furthermore, the Republic of Moldova is significantly dependent on Russian energy, which adds to the complexity of the problem. In the recent years Russia skillfully used the economic instrument of national power in regard to Moldova by imposing embargoes on certain Moldovan goods, creating obstacles for Moldovan workers willing to work in Russia, and manipulating gas prices.³⁵

The society in Moldova is highly divided and complex. Although there are no religious issues, the different ethnic groups have very dissimilar political views. While the majority of the Moldovan ethnic group tends to vote for the pro-European parties, the other groups such as Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, and Gagauz, for the most part prefer parties with a pro-Russian orientation. Part of this tendency is due to Moldova's failure to find a solution to the ethnic/political divergence within the society soon after the country's independence in 1991. The Republic of Moldova did not integrate the minorities on terms acceptable to all sides.³⁶ The other part of the societal problem is due to the ethnic mixture that occurred during the period when Moldova was part of the Soviet Union. During that time, the society was subject of intense propaganda and oppression with regard to its identity, history, culture, and tradition.³⁷ All these created a society vulnerable to foreign influence and divergent in regards to its envisioned future.

³⁵ Kirvelyte, 177.

³⁶ Costas, 121.

³⁷ Kirvelyte, 172.

This means that different ethnic groups see the threats to Moldova's security in different ways and there is not a national level consensus on the problem.

In the information environment, the Republic of Moldova has made a great effort to maintain positive self-awareness with regard to the media. The scope was to prevent Russian propaganda from influencing the Moldovan population or media. Occasionally, the Audiovisual Coordinating Council has warned, reprimanded, fined, or prohibited use of channels suspected of distorting information.³⁸ However, the fact that a significant number of Russian and pro-Russian TV channels operate in Moldova, as well as radio channels, and social media, as compared to once from the neighboring Romania, make the Republic of Moldova susceptible to pro-Russian influence.

Summary

The Republic of Moldova is a small, impoverished, landlocked country in the Eastern Europe. Its history is complex and has direct implications on the current situation of the country. The fact that Moldova was part of the Soviet Union and for the last two centuries was within Russia's "near abroad" or sphere of influence, along with the aggressive Russian foreign policy towards it, makes Moldova vulnerable to a potential Russian hybrid threat. A more detailed PMESII analysis follows in the next chapters. It reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the Republic of Moldova in regard to a potential Russian hybrid threat. The analysis also provides an insight as to whether or not Moldova

³⁸ Victoria Puiu, "Moldova: Does Russian TV Threaten national security?" *The Moscow Times*, May 2015, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/71961>.

puts the necessary effort to successfully oppose such a threat and maintain its sovereignty and independence.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to reveal whether or not the Republic of Moldova can or cannot successfully oppose a potential Russian hybrid threat, given the current situation in the country. In order to provide an accurate assessment, there are several distinct areas that need to be researched. These areas are: assessing the current danger of a potential Russian hybrid threat; a political, military, economic, social, information, and infrastructure (PMESII) analysis of the Republic of the Moldova's current situation; and Russia's strategies of conducting hybrid operations, to include past operations in Transnistria. There are sufficient sources, books, journals, monographs, written on topics related to hybrid threats, counter-hybrid operations, and Russia's hybrid strategies. There are also numerous sources describing what steps a country should take in order to prepare for a potential Russian hybrid threat. However, there are not sufficient sources addressing specifically the Republic of Moldova situation in regard to a potential Russian hybrid threat. Therefore, the paper uses US, Moldova, and international sources, in order to make a qualitative analysis and avoid biases. The literature review is structured in five distinct sections: doctrine, geopolitics/history, the Republic of Moldova strategic documents, PMESII analysis, and counterinsurgency theories.

Doctrine

The research uses the term "hybrid threat" because it best describes the menace that Moldova currently faces. There are other terms, like Asymmetric Warfare, New

Generation Warfare, and Multidimensional Warfare, which have similar meanings.

Although the difference among these terms is not significant for the purpose of this paper because they represent different descriptions of almost the same ways that focus on achieving similar ends, hybrid threat appears to best describe the situation of the Republic of Moldova, where elements of conventional, irregular, and even criminal elements, coupled with Russia's instruments of national power constitute the threat that Moldova faces.

The Training Circular 7-100, *Hybrid Threat* is a Department of the US Army publication that gives a general overview of hybrid threats. The publication defines a hybrid threat as well as other key terms. Although mainly focused on the hybrid threat that the United States faces, the publication gives an overview on general hybrid concepts, components, and strategies. Field Manual 3-24 *Counterinsurgency* is another Department of the US Army publication that gives definitions to some key terms and explains many aspects of insurgency and counterinsurgency operations.

History/Geopolitics

The book *Transnistria 1989-1992: Cronica unui razboi nedecarat*, by Ion Costas is a historical description of the events of 1989-1992 with regards to the Transnistria War. This was the period prior to the independence proclamation by Transnistria separatists and up through the end of the Transnistrian War. The author was the Republic of Moldova Minister of Defense during the 1992 War in Transnistria and was replaced shortly after the end of the war. Given his position, the author had access to primary sources of information and was aware of the political context of the situation. General Costas brings evidence in his book about Russia's interests in the region and its active

involvement in the military confrontation between the Republic of Moldova and separatists from the Transnistria region. The author gives a good insight on the overall context of the 1992 War and Moldova's situation in 1990-1992, which has many similarities to the current situation of the Republic of Moldova.

The book *Russian Foreign Policy*, by Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh provides a good explanation of the basis for Russian foreign policy. It explains how Russia views the ex-Soviet countries and therefore, it is relatively easy to deduce under which category the Republic of Moldova falls. The book also gives objective reasoning of why countries like Moldova maintained strong ties with Russia and why Russia is so important for most of the ex-Soviet countries. *Russian Foreign Policy* illustrates how the Russian foreign policy framework affects different countries, to include the Republic of Moldova.

Numerous other articles give insights on geopolitics and history that affect either directly or indirectly the national security of the Republic of Moldova. Some of them describe why Russia considers NATO a threat to Russia's interests, what ways Russia uses to deter that perceived threat, and how both these things affect Moldova. Other articles argue that Moldova's neutrality does not represent a viable security strategy, because the Russian Federation was the first to violate Moldova's neutrality. Russia never withdrew its weapons and its forces from Transnistria despite the fact that Moldova is a neutral country. Thus, the only thing neutrality has accomplished was to hinder the Republic of Moldova's development of its security sector.

Republic of Moldova Strategic Documents

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova is the supreme law of the country. In regard to the Moldova's security, the Constitution states in Article 11 that the Republic of Moldova declares its permanent neutrality and therefore does not accept foreign forces stationed on its territory. It also states that the Parliament is responsible for approval of military strategic documents. The Constitution protects minorities and their democratic rights in regard to their ethnicity, language, customs, and states that Transnistria region could have a special status within the Republic of Moldova. The Constitution implies that the Republic of Moldova must defend itself with own capabilities in case of external military aggression.

The National Security Concept (NSC) of the Republic of Moldova, represents the national security priorities of the state. It was approved by Law 112, on May 22, 2008. It describes and analyzes the basic national security guidelines, security vulnerabilities and threats; and the overall structure and function of the national security within the Republic of Moldova. Significantly, the NSC identifies the Transnistria region, and the Russian Federation's troops illegally stationed in Transnistria, as a threat to the security of the Republic of Moldova. However, the NSC identifies neutrality as the foundation of Moldova's national security. The military instrument of national power is only briefly mentioned in the document. The NSC has a significant focus on the diplomatic instrument of national power. It identifies European integration and international cooperation as an important ways to ensure national security. It does not identify the means necessary to preserve security. The NSC also serves as a foundation for the National Security Strategy.

The National Security Strategy (NSS), built upon national interests, provides an answer to the threats to national security. It establishes the objectives for the national security system and identifies ways to achieve the objectives. It was approved on July 15, 2011 by Parliamentary Decision 153. The main assumption in the document is that there is no significant threat of external aggression to the Republic of Moldova. Nevertheless, it identified the reform of the security sector as one of the most important objectives for national security. However, like in the NSC there are no means allocated or identified for this reform and a significant reliance on the international community is present throughout the document. The NSS identifies the National Army as the solitary force element for the defense of the country and stresses the necessity of the army's modernization. It is important to mention that according to the presidential Decree 1552, from May 6, 2015, the President of the Republic of Moldova established a working group to develop an updated National Security Strategy. The NSS provides the basis for other national security related documents, to include the future National Military Strategy that is yet to be developed.

PMESII sources

Multiple sources provide a good insight on the PMESII variables for the Republic of Moldova. The programs of political parties represent the aims and principles of the political parties. As of February 2016, there are five political parties represented in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova.³⁹ Analyzing the respective programs of all five

³⁹ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, "Political Factions," accessed February 6, 2016, <http://www.parlament.md/StructuraParlamentului/Fractiuniparlamentare/tabid/83/language/ro-RO/Default.aspx>.

political parties gives an understanding of their principles and priorities. It is important to identify how much the security aspect is emphasized, and what the ends, ways, and means are according to each one of the parties. Recognizing the common patterns of all the political parties' programs is an indicator of the overall political approach to the security issue. The Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior websites, as well as the books and articles listed in the literature review provide insight for the rest of the variables and lead to a conclusion of whether or not the current environment in the Republic of Moldova does or does not facilitate a successful opposition to a potential Russia supported hybrid threat.

Counterinsurgency theories

Counter-Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice by David Galula, focuses on the strategies and tactics for combatting insurgencies but also on what are the prerequisites for insurgencies. Although published in 1964, the theory appears to be very relevant. It analyzes a wide variety of insurgencies, causes, and consequences. Chapter 2 "The Prerequisites for a Successful Insurgency" provides a very well structured analysis about what conditions an insurgency requires to be successful. Most of these conditions appear or disappear as a result of the activities the government conducts to counter the insurgency. Other conditions are shaped by either the insurgents or by their outside support. The theory argues that if these conditions are present within a state, then that state is vulnerable to an insurgency and the insurgents have a higher chance of success. This theory is useful in the case of the Republic of Moldova for identifying the potential for an insurgency to develop as part of the hybrid threat. This paper addresses potential for an insurgency to develop in the Republic of Moldova.

The book *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st century* by Thomas X. Hammes, gives a reasonable explanation of the roots and characteristics of hybrid warfare. It describes the warfare by generation, first, second, third, and fourth, and provides numerous historical examples of the evolution of fourth generation warfare as well as what makes this type of warfare distinct from previous types of warfare. It is relevant to Moldova's situation because the description of "fourth generation" warfare in the book has many similarities to the hybrid threat, as defined by this paper and TC 7-100.

Summary

There are numerous sources that provide insight on hybrid threat generally. Many resources explain how hybrid threat situations have developed in the past, to include in Moldova specifically in 1992, in Georgia in 2008, and in Ukraine from 2014 to the present. There are many of sources about the current situation in Moldova that provide a good basis for assessing the situation. The counterinsurgency theories provide an indicator of whether or not the current situation in Moldova facilitates insurgency as part of the overall hybrid threat. However, there are not many resources that explain specifically the current hybrid threat that countries like the Republic of Moldova face. Nor are there many sources describing clearly the capabilities a small country should possess in order to successfully oppose a hybrid threat posed by a stronger nation-state with greater capabilities. Therefore, this paper further develops a subject which currently receives much attention but has not been analyzed in detail.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research tries to identify whether or not the Republic of Moldova can or cannot oppose a potential Russian hybrid threat, given the current situation in the country. This chapter describes the steps of the research, how they relate to each other, and how they lead to a logical conclusion.

The paper first defines the hybrid threat. Then it analyzes the threat, addressing its general capabilities and the potential effects it can cause on the Republic of Moldova. It is also important to identify whether or not there are conditions for an insurgency to develop, because it will increase the complexity of the situation. Therefore, the research uses Galula's counterinsurgency theory to identify if current conditions in Moldova facilitate the development of a potential insurgency as part of the Russian hybrid threat. Subsequently, qualitative research within a PMESII framework analyzes the operational variables in the Republic of Moldova, to include historical and geopolitical implications. Next, an analysis of the geography follows and leads the paper to the conclusion.

The paper breaks the six PMESII variables into 14 subcategories. The subcategories described below represent an efficient way to analyze the current situation in respect to a potential Russian hybrid threat.

Political

1. Republic of Moldova Strategic Documents and their emphasis on national security.

2. The political situation in Moldova and the political parties programs; how the programs address national security aspects.

3. The insurgency theory of David Galula, “strengths and weaknesses of the counterinsurgent,” related to the political variable.

Within the political variable the research emphasizes the currency of the strategic documents, the threats to the national security these documents identify, as well as the identified ends, ways, and means to address the potential Russian hybrid threat. It also examines the overall political situation in the Republic of Moldova, to include Moldova’s major political parties, their views on national security, and their will to resist a potential hybrid threat.

Military

1. The National Army of the Republic of Moldova.

2. The Ministry of Interior.

3. David Galula theory, “strengths and weaknesses of the counterinsurgent,” as related to the military variable.

The examination of the military variable, based on the information from open sources, analyzes the investments by the government in the military and investments through security cooperation programs. It also focusses on the police forces as a primary instrument to counter Russian hybrid activities during their initial stages.

Economic

1. Economic overview of the country. Why Russia can influence Moldova.

2. Moldova's dependence on Russian energy, the implications of this dependence and efforts to counter this dependency.
3. Russia's embargoes on Moldovan products and its manipulation of the Moldovan workforce.

The analysis of the economic variable examines the overall economic situation in the country and how it influences Moldova's vulnerability to a potential Russian hybrid threat. It also analyzes the energy dependence of the Republic of Moldova upon Russia and how it affects the Moldova's overall susceptibility to external influence.

Social

1. Social differences among Moldova's population and causes of these differences.
2. Foreign Policy preferences of the population and the polarization of the society.

The examination of the social variable focuses on the ethnic problems within the country. It conducts a general overview of the different ethnic groups in Moldova and the political polarization of these groups.

Information

1. Media and how Russia uses it to influence target audiences in Moldova.
2. Moldova's efforts to control/confront Russian influence.
3. David Galula theory, "strengths and weaknesses of the counterinsurgent," as related to the information variable.

The information variable examines Moldova's media and the overall susceptibility of the Republic of Moldova to external influence. It also analyzes Moldova's efforts to oppose Russian influence activities via the media.

Infrastructure

1. Airports. Why they matter.
2. Transportations infrastructure.
3. Communications infrastructure.

The infrastructure analysis focuses mainly on the airports that can have a significant impact in regards to a potential Russian hybrid threat. The two airports analyzed are the Chisinau International Airport and the Tiraspol Airport. There are issues related to these airports that are important to the national security of Moldova.

During the PMESII analysis, the paper examines several variables and sub variables with David Galula's counterinsurgency theory and specifically with the "strengths and weaknesses of the counterinsurgent." The theory can be applied to the political, the military, and partially to the informational variables. This is useful to identify if the current conditions facilitate not only a Russian hybrid threat but also a potential insurgency as part of the hybrid threat. Before the comparison with a specific variable, the paper explains what exactly is analyzed or compared and for what purpose.

David Galula's prerequisites for insurgency

David Galula's prerequisites for insurgency are examined to determine if the prerequisites he identifies support the development of a potential insurgency as part of the hybrid threat.

David Galula identifies four prerequisites for a successful insurgency:

1. A Cause;
2. Weakness of the counterinsurgent;
3. Geographic conditions;
4. Outside support.⁴⁰

The first prerequisite, “A Cause” is analyzed at the beginning of chapter 5.

Prerequisites 2-4 are examined in chapter five with the operational variables that they are relevant to.

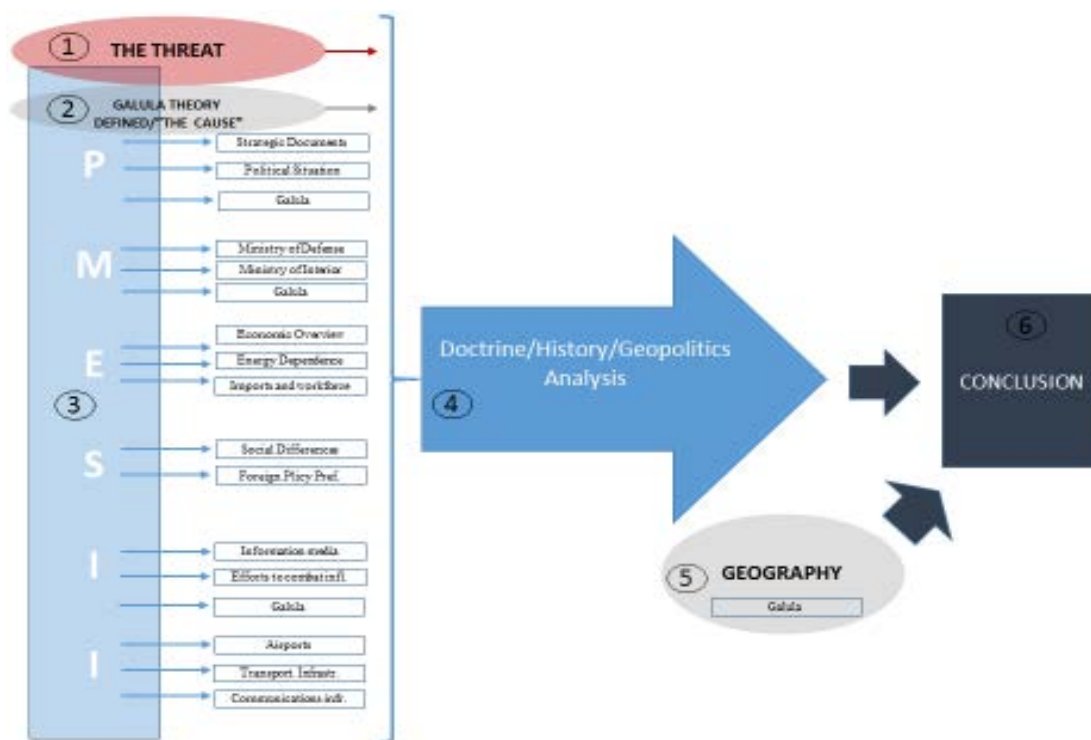


Figure 4. Methodology

Source: Developed by the author.

⁴⁰ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (St. Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 2005), 18-25.

Once the current situation is clear, an analysis of the geography of Moldova follows. Geography appears to have significant implications and therefore the paper analyzes it as a separate variable. After the research analyzes the current situation through geopolitical/historical lens, the paper comes to the conclusion.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of the paper is to reveal whether or not the Republic of Moldova can or cannot oppose a potential Russian hybrid threat, given the current situation in the country. This chapter first defines the hybrid threat. Then it analyzes the threat, addressing its general capabilities and potential effects it can cause. Subsequently, the chapter uses Galula's counterinsurgency theory to define the "Cause," which is one of the prerequisites of a successful insurgency as part of the hybrid threat. Afterwards the chapter briefly explains the prerequisites that would facilitate the development of the insurgency as part of the Russian hybrid threat. Subsequently, the chapter conducts a PMESII variables analysis to the political and military variables that are most relevant in Galula's theory. The chapter continues with the examination of the remaining operational variables in order to identify whether or not the current conditions facilitate the successful opposition to a potential Russian hybrid threat. At the end of each variable analysis, the paper gives a brief conclusion taking into consideration the findings from the variable examination, the counterinsurgency theory, where applicable, and some historical/geopolitical examples or implications. Moreover, the chapter also analyzes the implications of the geography of the Republic of Moldova in the current situation. Finally, this chapter provides a recommendation as to whether the Republic of Moldova can or cannot successfully oppose a potential Russian hybrid threat, given the current situation in the country.

The hybrid threat as related to Moldova

According to TC 7-100, “a hybrid threat is the diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, and/or criminal elements all unified to achieve mutually benefitting effects.”⁴¹

For the purpose of this paper, a hybrid threat is considered the threat posed by an inner core state which employs all the instruments of the national power, in varying combination, as well as regular, irregular forces, and/or criminal elements within the targeted state in order to establish a long-term situation amenable to the aggressor’s national interests.

In the case of the Republic of Moldova the inner core state that poses a real threat is the Russian Federation. The elements of its threats are:

1. The diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of Russia’s national power - DIME;
 2. The separatist Transnistrian region armed forces and potentially a significant part of its population;
 3. Elements of Gagauz and Russian minorities within Moldova;
- Moldovans that are persuaded and ready to support a potential Russian hybrid threat.

The Cause

According to David Galula, the Cause is one of the major pre-requisites for a successful insurgency. It drives the insurgency and is especially necessary during the

⁴¹ US Department of the Army, TC 7-100, *Hybrid Threat*, 1-1.

initial stages of an insurgency for recruiting and the support of its initial operations.⁴² In the case of the Republic of Moldova the “Cause” has deep roots going all the way to 1812, when as a result of the Russo-Turkish war ending by the Bucharest Treaty, the Russian Empire acquired what is today the Republic of Moldova.⁴³ After this event Russia started an aggressive program of “Russification” in the region. In order to accelerate this process, Russia used anti-West and anti-Romanian narratives, changed the alphabet from Latin to Cyrillic, replaced the intellectuals, and even tried to change the country’s history. The hatred towards the West that Russia successfully instilled in Moldova’s population, serve today as the foundation for a potential insurgency “Cause.”

From 1812, Russia and its supporters adapted and modified ideology and policy in regard to Moldova according to the situation. However, the basic narrative remained the same—The West, to include Romania, are the evil and Moldova must be part of the Russian sphere of influence, in one form or another. This was done deliberately in order to accelerate the “Russification” and prevent future reintegration of Moldova with the West and with Romania. While part of the Soviet Union, USSR authorities aimed to antagonize Moldova towards Romania to the greatest extent possible.⁴⁴ As a result, immediately after Moldova’s independence, Gagauz leadership fostered the anti-Romanian narrative. The same situation existed in the Transnistria region. The local authorities in Transnistria started the “anti-Moldova revolution” long before the 1992

⁴² US Department of the Army, TC 7-100, *Hybrid Threat*, 17-42.

⁴³ Barclay, 14.

⁴⁴ Kirvelyte, 171.

war. They used simple but efficient techniques - having a disproportionate number of ethnic Russians in leadership positions, educating cadre in other parts of the USSR even if training was available in Moldova, and discouraging usage of the Romanian language.⁴⁵

A more recent example of anti-Western and pro-Russian narrative was the Gagauz referendum held on February 2, 2014. There were two questions on the ballots. The first question asked whether or not Gagauzia should have the right of self-determination; the second and third questions asked if Gagauzia should join the Eurasian Economic Union (Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan) or the European Union.⁴⁶ Despite the fact that Moldova considered the referendum unconstitutional and tried to block it, the Gagauzian authorities held the referendum anyway.⁴⁷ One of the intentions of Gagauzia's referendum was to send a clear message to Moldovan authorities that Gagauzia is firmly against European integration and any movement from the Moldova side would trigger significant consequences. The referendum also demonstrates that Russia has significant influence over Moldova and that any decision Moldova makes must take into account Russia's interests.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid., 169-177.

⁴⁶ The Jamestown Foundation, "The Gagauz Referendum in Moldova: A Russian Political Weapon?" February 5, 2014, accessed February 11, 2016, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=41922&no_cache=1#.Vr1ClcvMvIU.

⁴⁷ Stratfor, "In Moldova, Gagauzia's Referendum Illustrates the EU-Russian Struggle," February 4, 2014, accessed February 11, 2016, <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/moldova-gagauzias-referendum-illustrates-eu-russian-struggle>.

⁴⁸ Stratfor.

According to David Galula's theory, the best cause is the one that can attract the largest number of supporters and repel the minimum number of opponents.⁴⁹ Given the divisions in Moldova's society, the pro-Russian minorities, and the portion of Moldovans who are nostalgic for the Soviet Union, the cause appears to be very effective, and the numbers of its supporters are relatively high. Furthermore, it has proven itself effective throughout history. In one fashion or another it persuaded and mobilized supporters throughout the recent history. This implies that the cause is lasting and therefore matches another criterion from Galula's theory—the cause must be lasting.⁵⁰

Consequently, there is a cause for a potential insurgency as part of a hybrid threat. The cause is mostly of political nature with economic aspect added to it and is discussed later under the economic variable. The target audience is the population from the Transnistria region, the pro-Russian minorities, and Soviet nostalgic Moldovans. It has proven itself an effective cause, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The presence of such a "cause" is a disadvantage for the Republic of Moldova and will negatively influence Moldova's effort in successfully opposing a potential Russian hybrid threat.

⁴⁹ Galula, 19-20.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 21.

Weaknesses and strengths of the counterinsurgent

Within the prerequisites for a successful insurgency, David Galula identifies five weaknesses and strengths (and several subdivisions) of a counterinsurgent as prerequisites of a successful insurgency:⁵¹

1. Absence of problems;
2. National consensus;
3. Resoluteness of the counterinsurgent leadership;
4. Counterinsurgent leaders' knowledge of the counterinsurgency warfare;
5. The machine for the control of the population:
 - a. The political structure;
 - b. The administrative bureaucracy;
 - c. The police;
 - d. The armed forces;

These weaknesses and strengths are analyzed below with the PMESII variables that they relate to. Weaknesses number 1 to 5 (a and b) are examined with the political variable. Number 5 (c and d) is analyzed with the military variable.

The political variable

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova is the supreme law of the country. In regard to the country's security, the constitution states in Article 11 that the Republic of Moldova declares its permanent neutrality and therefore does not accept foreign forces stationed on its territory. It also states that the Parliament is responsible for approval of

⁵¹ Galula, 26-33.

military strategic documents. The Constitution protects minorities and their democratic rights in regard to their ethnicity, language, customs, and that the Transnistria region may have a special status within the Republic of Moldova.⁵² The Constitution implies that the Republic of Moldova must be able to defend itself with its own capabilities in case of an external military aggression. Although the Constitution does not mention a hybrid threat, it does condemn separatism, the presence of foreign troops in Moldova, and other activities that present a threat to the regime.⁵³ Therefore, the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova provides the basis necessary to employ the instruments of national power in order to deter and if necessary defeat a conventional or hybrid threat.

The National Security Concept (NSC) of the Republic of Moldova, represents an evaluation of the security environment and the national security priorities of the state. It was approved by Law 112, on May 22, 2008.⁵⁴ It describes and analyzes the basic national security guidelines, security vulnerabilities and threats, as well as the overall structure and function of the national security. The NSC also serves as the foundation for the National Security Strategy. It is important to mention that the NSC states that the Transnistria region, the Russian Federation's troops, and the energy dependency pose conventional and unconventional threats to the security of the Republic of Moldova. However, the NSC identifies neutrality as the foundation of national security. The

⁵² Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, *Constitution of the Republic of Moldova*, accessed February 6, 2016, http://lex.justice.md/document_rom.php?id=44B9F30E:7AC17731.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, *National Security Concept (2008)*.

alternative for national security—the military instrument of National Power—is only briefly mentioned in the document. The NSC has a significant focus on the diplomatic instrument of National Power. It identifies european integration and international cooperation as important ways to assure national security. The document identifies that the collective efforts would be the solution for potential conflicts.⁵⁵ Although it identifies security itself as a prerequisite for stability and development,⁵⁶ the NSC does not identify the means to preserve security.

The National Security Strategy, built upon national interests, provides an answer to the threats to national security. It establishes the objectives for the national security system and identifies ways to achieve the objectives. It was approved on July 15, 2011 by the Parliamentary Decision 153.⁵⁷ The main assumption in the document is that there is no significant threat of external aggression to the Republic of Moldova. Even though, it identified the reform in the security sector as one of the most important objectives for national security. However, like in the NSC there are no means identified and significant reliance on international community is emphasized throughout the document. The NSS identifies the National Army as the solitary force element and stresses the necessity of the National Army's modernization. According to the NSS, the withdrawal of Russian forces is imperative for Moldova's security and calls for changing the peace keeping operation in Transnistria into an international peace keeping operation. It is important to mention

⁵⁵ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, *National Security Concept (2008)*.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova*.

that according to presidential Decree 1552, dated May 6, 2015, the President of the Republic of Moldova established a working group in order to develop an updated National Security Strategy. The NSS will also serve as the foundation for the National Military Strategy (NMS) that is yet to be developed.

The above strategic documents reveal a disconnect between the ends, ways, and means concerning the Republic of Moldova's security. While security is considered of paramount importance, the ways to achieve it lean much towards European Union, cooperation with partner countries, and leveraging other diplomatic tools such as international organizations and bilateral relations.

At the same time, neutrality is considered the basis of Moldova's security. Most of the Eastern European countries did not remain neutral after they became independent because they viewed neutrality as a retention of the Soviet sphere of influence.⁵⁸ The Republic of Moldova chose to be neutral. However, Moldova could not benefit from the neutrality like other neutral countries in Europe did because of the increased complexities it faced. As the ex-deputy in the Moldovan Parliament Oazu Nantoi ironically stated, "Some people still believe that [in Moldova's case] if someone had mixed together in a big pot the Unified Workers Council, the Popular Front [a pro-Western movement in 1989-1992], the 'Edinstvo' international movement [a pro-Russian movement], the Gagauz Halki [a Gagauz separatist political party], Leonida Lari [poet, journalist, and politician that advocated for Moldova-Romania reunification], . . . the KGB with all its agents, and the Communist Party nomenclature, then the result would be another

⁵⁸ Gvosdev and Marsh, 210.

Switzerland.”⁵⁹ It is obvious that the reality makes it difficult for a country like Moldova to solve all its problems by declaring itself neutral.

Although the Republic of Moldova emphasizes its neutrality, it is Russia that has been violating Moldova’s neutrality since the very first day Moldova declared itself a neutral country. In these circumstances, neutrality does not serve as a security strategy,⁶⁰ especially since Russia has already demonstrated the willingness and the ability to violate the neutrality and sovereignty of countries that are not part of Western security or economic organizations. Ukraine was a neutral country too. Furthermore, Russia had recognized Ukrainian borders in 1997, to include Crimea.⁶¹ Nevertheless neither Ukraine’s neutrality, nor recognition of its borders, would not have prevented Russia from annexing Crimea. At the same time, Russia has demonstrated that it is careful about not violating the sovereignty of states that are aligned with Western Institutions. Moldova’s neutrality can act two ways. It could provide more illegitimacy for an external attacker in case of a conventional aggression. However, it is obvious that in case of a hybrid threat, neutrality will prevent an efficient involvement of foreign partners.

Furthermore, the National Army is considered the primary means of defending the country, yet it is only briefly mentioned in these documents. The National Army is further examined during the military variable analysis. It appears that both NCS and NSS

⁵⁹ Costas, 529.

⁶⁰ Kirvelyte, 167.

⁶¹ Gvosdev and Marsh, 171.

are outdated. The positive aspect though is that the President established a working group to update the NSS.

The political situation in the Republic of Moldova has been relatively unstable, especially since 2009. Neither party has a parliamentary majority. This was a catalyst for the political instability and had numerous second and third order effects. The Republic of Moldova has faced several political crises during the last few years which has caused the population's mistrust of the government.⁶²

Moldova's economic situation along with the competition for the population's support forced the political parties to gravitate towards economic and social issues. As a consequence, the security aspect was a lower priority. An analysis of the political parties programs suggests that security was not a first priority for the parties that currently make up the Parliament. This tendency appeared to not change even after the Ukrainian Crisis that started in 2014.

There are currently five political parties and 26 free fraction deputies in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova. Below is an analysis of the five parties' political programs in regards to national security. Parties with the most seats in the Parliament are analyzed first.

The Socialist Party of the Republic of Moldova is the party with the largest number of seats in Moldova's Parliament with 24 seats.⁶³ According to the Party of

⁶² European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, "Moldova," last update September 7, 2015, accessed February 6, 2016, <http://www.europeanforum.net/country/moldova>.

⁶³ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, "Political Factions."

Socialists of the Republic of Moldova's program, the security of the Republic of Moldova can be achieved through the security of all the countries.⁶⁴ The party opts for a fair international order and a general European security model for the 21st century. The document is very succinct on the security aspect and does not identify ends, ways, and means addressing the issue. It also does not identify the threats to the national security. As with most of the other parties, the Socialist Party program is economic and social centric.

The Democratic Party of the Republic of Moldova (PDM) has 17 seats and is the party with the next highest number of seats in the Parliament.⁶⁵ The PDM does not give many details about its views in regard to national security. It condemns separatist and extremist movements and at the same time opts for the defense of Moldova's sovereignty and independence. PDM opts for a balanced political approach (EU and CIS) and seeks a peaceful solution for the Transnistria conflict while maintaining the permanent neutrality of the country.⁶⁶ PDM does not provide in its political program any further vision concerning the national security.

The Liberal Party (PL) of the Republic of Moldova with 13 seats in the Parliament is the next party.⁶⁷ In its political program, PL sets four political objectives.

⁶⁴ Veronica Abramciuc, "*Declaratia Programatica a Partidului Politic Partidul Socialistilor din Republica Moldova Patria-Rodina*," 3, accessed February 4, 2016, <http://www.e-democracy.md/parties/psmpr/>.

⁶⁵ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, "Political Factions."

⁶⁶ Democracy, *Obiective programatice ale Partidului Democrat din Moldova*, accessed February 4, 2016, <http://www.e-democracy.md/parties/pdm/>.

⁶⁷ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, "Political Factions."

Two of them directly relate to the national security. Objective number one is the achievement of sovereignty, independence, territorial integration and national unification. Objective number two is to join the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). EU and NATO membership are the absolute priority of the PL.⁶⁸ The Liberal Party Political program has a more direct stance towards the Russian Federation. It asserts that Russia must be recognized as part of the Transnistria conflict. PL also states that Transnistria must be excluded from the negotiations process and Russia included as a participant in the conflict and not as an observer as it is now.⁶⁹ PL also touches on the energy security issue and intends to connect Moldova to the European energy system via Romania. This would give the Republic of Moldova the possibility of buying energy from the West and from the East as well. The PL foreign policy is based on protecting the national interests of the Republic of Moldova, on forming alliances and partnerships which would guarantee the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the country.⁷⁰ Consequently, according to the PL political program, the ways to achieve the security ends rely heavily on foreign partners.

The Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM) has 12 seats in the Parliament. Its program identifies the Transnistrian conflict and the presence of Russian forces in the region as a

⁶⁸ Democracy, *Programul politic al Partidului Liberal*, accessed February 6, 2016, <http://www.e-democracy.md/parties/pl/>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

threat to its national security.⁷¹ The party also views Moldova as a potential contributor to the regional security. It states as necessary the reformation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Security and Intelligence Service. The party also declares its commitment to fully implement the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), in order to deepen Moldova's partnership with NATO, as well as professionalization of the National Army to a level that would permit the National Army to execute its missions related to the national security. PLDM also addresses the national security documents, such as National Security Strategy, the future National Military Strategy, not yet adopted, and other documents that impact the national security.⁷² PLDM also states the need for energy diversification and views the United States as an important partner for Moldova's security. Although PLDM has a more detailed and clear plan concerning national security in comparison with the other parties, it does not identify the means to achieve the ends, nor does it give any tentative timelines.

The Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM), with 7 seats in the Parliament has identified five strategic tasks that the party wants to accomplish. Task number five is to adopt long term fundamental principles for the national security: permanent neutrality and the reintegration of the Republic. It states that Moldova must be a competitive state, with an open economy, within a democratic society with a high level

⁷¹ Democracy, *Programul politic al Partidului Liberal Democrat*, accessed February 4, 2016, <http://www.e-democracy.md/en/elections/parliamentary/2010/opponents/pldm/>.

⁷² Ibid.

of security.⁷³ It also opposes any separatist and/or nationalist movement. However, in the same document, PCRM asserts that it pursues a phased reduction of the military component of the Republic of Moldova, which contradicts the high level of security objective of the Communist Party. PCRM considers that only denying the “single vector”, which means connection and reliance exclusively on either the European Union or Russia, foreign policy will create cohesion within the society and will assure a new quality of national security. Therefore, the party does not see a need for the Republic of Moldova to be part of any military alliance or military block; it views alliances as a repression of freedom.⁷⁴

Even if these political programs of the parties represented in the Parliament do not denote an accurate description of the parties’ actual political actions, the programs give a sense of how each party views the security problems. There are two major conclusions from the analysis of the programs of the political parties listed above.

The first one is that the security problem does not make up a significant part of the political programs. The reason may not be the unwillingness to invest in the country’s security sector but the unawareness of what should be done in order to address the security issue. Some parties describe the security aspect more than other parties do; however, none of the programs have clearly articulated ends, ways, and means for the security sector. Furthermore, it is obvious that when Moldova confronts difficult problems in all the sectors, it is difficult to prioritize security, especially when the

⁷³ Democracy, *Programul politic al Partidului Comunistilor*, accessed February 6, 2016, <http://www.e-democracy.md/parties/pcrm/>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

political fight for winning popular support is so close among different parties. Given the frequency of political impasses,⁷⁵ political parties prioritize resource allocations to sectors that will bring short-term popular support.

The second conclusion is that parties rely heavily on foreign partners. It appears that there is a false assumption that nobody will attack Moldova and even if someone does, Moldova's partners will significantly assist Moldova. There is little reliance on Moldova's ability to take care of itself, although it should according to the Constitution. Perhaps it is a very difficult task to accomplish given the current situation of the country, or maybe security is not the first priority. Furthermore, the intimidations by the Russian Federation possibly make Moldova's politicians hesitate; or maybe this is the correct approach if a precondition is not to irritate Russia. Whichever the case, the result is that there is not a clear approach to the national security and the reliance on foreign partners is too heavy. In light of Russia's invasions in Georgia 2008 and Ukraine 2014, it is safe to assume that foreign partners, although willing to help, may not be able to decisively influence a potential Russian hybrid threat and potential aggression. These wars showed not only that Western countries did not significantly interfere but they also showed the impotence of other structures, such as GUAM, created to oppose Russia.⁷⁶ Therefore, without possessing its own capabilities to deter or defeat a Russian hybrid threat, the Republic of Moldova will remain susceptible if not vulnerable to potential aggressions from a Russian hybrid threat.

⁷⁵ Melissa Rossi, "Moldova's Ongoing Political Impasse," *New Presence: The Prague Journal Of Central European Affairs* (2011): 34-40.

⁷⁶ Gvosdev and Marsh, 178.

Another tendency observed in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova is the migration of Parliamentary deputies from one party to another and even declaring themselves unaffiliated deputies. At present there are 25 unaffiliated deputies which have previously been part of one of the political parties elected during the November 2014 elections.⁷⁷ Despite the fact that people vote for specific political parties, not for specific deputies, some Parliamentary deputies nevertheless leave the parties that people voted for. The reason deputies leave their parties differ. Sometimes they claim they leave because they change their opinion; sometimes they leave because parties change their pre-electoral programs. Whichever the case, the result is that people do not get what they voted for. In other words, this phenomenon may be an indicator of lack of democracy. Although it requires professional expertise to find a solutions to deputies' migration, there should be a mechanism in place to prevent this phenomenon or mitigate its effects.

The next step to analyze the political variable is to view it through the lens of David Galula's counterinsurgency warfare theory. Five out of the six strengths and weaknesses of the theory can be used to further analyze the political variable: absence of problems, national consensus, resoluteness of the leadership, leadership knowledge of counterinsurgency, and the machine for the control of the population.

Absence of problems. From the political standpoint, this is not an understatement for the Republic of Moldova. Moldova's Parliament is politically polarized.⁷⁸ The number of pro-European parties' seats and the parliamentary opposition's seats in the

⁷⁷ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, "Political Factions."

⁷⁸ Rossi, 34-40.

Parliament are very close. It gets even more unpredictable when members of some parties vote for another party's interests. One of the last examples was the vote for the Prime-Minister in January 2016, when deputies from the pro-European parties and independent parliamentary deputies coming from the Communist parties voted for the investment of the Prime-Minister.⁷⁹ Other problems are repeated changes in the government over the past year, the miraculous disappearance of \$ 1 billion from Moldova's banks, and the recent protests showing distrust and frustration with the authorities in general.⁸⁰ These, are certainly indicators that "absence of problems" from the political standpoint is unfortunately not one of Moldova's strengths. Consequently, according to David Galula's counterinsurgency theory, these problems are a precondition of Moldova's vulnerability to insurgency.

National Consensus. There is no national consensus in the Republic of Moldova within the political variable. People that voted for pro-European parties just slightly outnumbered those who voted for the other parties.⁸¹ The political parties themselves are polarized as well. No party is capable of winning a majority in the Parliament. Consequently, parties must form coalitions. The lack of consensus was obvious

⁷⁹ Jurnal, "Șapte liberal-democrați care au votat pentru Guvernul Filip, excluși din fracțiunea PLDM," accessed February 8, 2016, <http://www.jurnal.md/ro/politic/2016/1/22/sapte-liberal-democrati-care-au-votat-pentru-guvernul-filip-exclusi-din-fractiunea-pldm/>.

⁸⁰ Freedom House, "After a Year of Scandal and Gridlock, Moldova Needs More Than New Elections," accessed February 8, 2016, <https://freedomhouse.org/blog/after-year-scandal-and-gridlock-moldova-needs-more-new-elections>.

⁸¹ Elena Rusu and Cristina Cerevate. "The New Commission's Stance on Enlargement and Moldova's European Ambitions," *On-line Journal Modelling the New Europe*, no 13 (2014): 26.

immediately after the proclamation of independence in 1991, followed by the Transnistria War in 1992. According to Galula's theory, the solidity of the government or regime is primarily based upon this factor.⁸² Therefore, the lack of national consensus and solidarity makes Moldova vulnerable to insurgency.

Resoluteness of the counterinsurgent leadership. This is a subjective factor, hard to estimate in the absence of actual counterinsurgency operations. However, a tentative assessment can be done by analyzing recent historical actions. The Republic of Moldova fought a war with the Russian proxies and Russian forces in 1992. According to General Ion Costas, who was the Minister of Defense during the Transnistria War, the Republic of Moldova was slow in reacting to the situation in 1992.⁸³ He also mentions that Moldovan leadership was influenced if not intimidated by the Russian Federation during the conflict.⁸⁴ Another issue is the fact that despite the numerous requests of the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior, the political leadership did not substantially increase their budget, as detailed later during the discussion of the military variable. These historical facts coupled with the hesitation today to invest in the defense capabilities of Moldova as shown by the analysis of the political programs of the parties listed above indicate that there is either no possibility due to lack of funds or no will to address the hybrid threat. Whichever the case, there is no full political leaders' resoluteness in addressing a Russian hybrid threat.

⁸² Galula, 26.

⁸³ Costas, 131.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 479.

Leadership Knowledge of counterinsurgency. This is one of the advantages for the Republic of Moldova, even if the Security Communication and Information Strategy identifies as a vulnerability the lack of public authorities' education in defense reforms and national security.⁸⁵ The lessons learned from the Transnistria conflict are a good base for the leadership to understand the Russian hybrid threat and potential insurgency. Furthermore, the Security Council of the Republic of Moldova represents one of the most important assets of the political leadership for problems related to national security. The Security Council is a consultative body that analyzes the activity of ministries and departments in regard to the national security. It provides recommendations to the President of the Republic of Moldova on national security issues, concerning both external and internal policy. Another advantage are the lessons learned from the Russian aggression in Ukraine. These lessons provide a very good insight about the Russian hybrid threat, patterns of their operations, strengths and vulnerabilities.

The machine for control of the population. David Galula identifies four instruments of control: the political structure, the administrative bureaucracy, the police, and the armed forces. The last two, the police and the armed forces, will be examined during the Military variable analysis.⁸⁶

David Galula views political structure as an instrument of control only if political opposition is not tolerated by the government. The Republic of Moldova is a democratic country, even if not perfect, and the opposition is tolerated and has rights. Galula would

⁸⁵ Government of the Republic of Moldova.

⁸⁶ Galula, 27.

view these circumstances as making Moldova vulnerable to an insurgency. However, this condition is one of the few that must not be modified because Moldova aspires to become a European country. Controlling the population, in the way Galula describes it, is not an option for a democracy. Instead, Moldova must make efforts to further increase its democratic values in order to mitigate the insurgency risk. A democratic country with a strong democracy can easily reduce the risk of a potential insurgency.

The administrative bureaucracy can either deter or facilitate insurgency. According to Galula's theory, insurgency is a bottom to top movement and the administrative vacuum at the bottom plays into the hands of the insurgent.⁸⁷ There are at least two places with some degree of administrative vacuum: Transnistria and the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia. The most obvious vacuum is in Transnistria because the Republic of Moldova does not have de facto control of it. Moreover, analysts go further and consider Transnistria the Europe's black hole.⁸⁸ There are numerous organized criminal groups in Transnistria. These groups which are engaged in illegal arms deals, smuggling, and money laundering.⁸⁹ Transnistria also hosts the largest ex-Soviet ammunition storage facility in Kolbasna, and several armament factories. The Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia is in a much better situation when compared

⁸⁷ Galula, 30.

⁸⁸ Felix Buttin, "A Human Security Perspective on Transnistria: Reassessing the Situation within the "Black Hole of Europe," *Human Security Journal* (February 3, 2007): 13, accessed February 9, 2016, http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/5385~v~A_Human_Security_Perspecve_on_Tnsnistria_Reassessing_the_Situation_Within_the_Black_Hole_of_Europe.pdf

⁸⁹ NATO Parliamentary Assembly, "The economic situation in Moldova," accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=1172>.

with Transnistria. Although it is autonomous, Moldova has control over the region. However, there have been situations in Gagauzia that developed quickly and showed that there has been an administrative vacuum. One was identified after the invitation by the Moldovan authorities of the Bureau of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to monitor the election of the Bashkan of Gagauzia (Moldova) held on December 3 and 17, 2006. The monitors identified several shortfalls in the election that pointed towards a legislative vacuum.⁹⁰ The first two conditions of the “machine for control of the population” of David Galula—the political structure and the administrative bureaucracy—if applied to the situation in the Republic of Moldova, facilitate the development of an insurgency.

Consequently, the political variable represents limited advantages and numerous disadvantages for the Republic of Moldova. The most important issues are the fact that Moldova relies heavily on the international community and is politically polarized. National security is not a primary concern. The Republic of Moldova has significant political factors that would negatively affect Moldova’s ability to successfully oppose a potential insurgent threat. Therefore, the political variable makes Moldova vulnerable to a potential insurgency and Russian hybrid threat.

⁹⁰ Susan Bolam and Paolo Rondelli, “Election of the Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia (Moldova) (observed on December 3 and 17, 2006),” Spring Session Cg (13) 43part2 (March 26–28, 2007), accessed February 9, 2016, <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1111651&Site=COE>.

The military variable

For the purpose of this paper, the military variable analysis comprises the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs with all their subordinate units. It is important to analyze both these institutions because although they are not the only ones, they would be the primary ones dealing with a potential aggression of a hybrid threat. Moldova's forces will have to face the elements of a hybrid threat previously mentioned in this paper: the Transnistrian and Russian military forces located in Transnistria, factions of Gagauz and Russian minorities and potentially Moldovans supporting the hybrid threat.

The National Army of the Republic of Moldova was created on September 3, 1991. It inherited from the Soviet Army whatever equipment Russia did not have time to evacuate.⁹¹ Shortly after its creation, the National Army saw its first combat operations during the War in Transnistria in early 1992. General Ion Costas, the Minister of Defense at that time mentioned that the National Army did not have time to prepare properly to fight a war with the Russian 14th Army after only a few months of the Moldova's army creation.⁹²

Currently, the mission of the Ministry of Defense is to develop defense policy, conduct the building and development of the National Army, discover military risks and

⁹¹ Vitalie Ciobanu, *Organizarea Institutiei Militare a Republicii Moldova* (Chisinau, Moldova: Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Moldova, 2011), 36.

⁹² Costas, 488.

threats, and protect the security of state.⁹³ The Republic of Moldova is a neutral country and has deployed very limited number of personnel abroad. The result of these lack of deployments is the limited combat experience, other than Transnistria War, of the National Army over the last two decades.

Moreover, because of Moldova's neutrality and the difficult economic situation ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the National Army is underfunded. The table below shows the funds allocated to the Ministry of Defense. It is easy to identify how severely underfunded the National Army was and what consequences it has probably created within the organization.

⁹³ Ministry of Defense of Republic of Moldova, "The Mission," accessed February 15, 2016, <http://www.army.md/?lng=3&action=show&cat=154>.

Table 1. Budget Allocations for the Ministry of Defense 1992-2014

Year	Currency	Allocations	GDP Billions lei	% Of GDP
1992	thousands ruble	1 570 465,0		
1993	thousands ruble	3 800 000,0		
1994	thousands lei	29 080,0		
1995	thousands lei	64,784.5	6.47	1.00%
1996	thousands lei	70,581.5	7.79	0.91%
1997	thousands lei	80,941.2	8.91	0.91%
1998	thousands lei	56,959.0	9.1	0.63%
1999	thousands lei	64,861.4	12.3	0.53%
2000	thousands lei	63,601.7	15.9	0.40%
2001	thousands lei	76,731.6	19.1	0.40%
2002	thousands lei	94,729.9	22.6	0.42%
2003	thousands lei	109,467.5	27.6	0.40%
2004	thousands lei	115,628.3	32	0.36%
2005	thousands lei	126,936.4	37.7	0.34%
2006	thousands lei	164,348.3	44.8	0.37%
2007	thousands lei	218,279.3	53.4	0.41%
2008	thousands lei	223,675.1	62.8	0.36%
2009	thousands lei	222,686.8	60.4	0.37%
2010	thousands lei	205,054.6	71.8	0.29%
2011	thousands lei	233,257.6	82.1	0.28%
2012	thousands lei	250,474.5	87.8	0.29%
2013	thousands lei	303,394.7	97.6	0.31%
2014	thousands lei	354,793.3	106.1	0.33%

Source: Radu Burduja, “Transforming for Multinational Operations: A Study of the National Army of Moldova” (Master’s thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2014), 59.

The National Army currently has a Land Forces Command and an Air Force Command.⁹⁴ The Land Forces Command has three motorized infantry brigades, an artillery battalion, a peacekeeping battalion, and several other enabling units. The Air

⁹⁴ “Commonwealth of Independent States: Moldova,” accessed February 15, 2016, <http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/9509898/commonwealth-independent-states-moldova>.

Force Command has an aviation unit (fixed and rotary wing aircraft) and an air defense missile regiment. Additionally, the General Staff has the “*Fulger*” Special Forces Battalion directly subordinated.⁹⁵

The following is a comparison of the variable to David Galula’s counterinsurgency theory, the prerequisites of the counterinsurgent. “The machine for the control of the population,” as identified by David Galula, is either a strength or a weakness for the counterinsurgent and has four sub points.⁹⁶ Two of them—the political structure and the administrative bureaucracy have been analyzed under the political variable. The other two - the armed forces and the police, are analyzed under the military variable.

The Armed Forces

David Galula states that the armed forces need to possess additional multipliers if compared to conventional operations. He identifies the following four:

1. The numerical strength of the armed forces in relation to the size of the population of the country;
2. The composition of the armed forces;
3. The feeling of the individual soldier towards the insurgent’s cause and the counterinsurgent’s regime;
4. The time lapse before intervention.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ “Commonwealth of Independent States: Moldova.”

⁹⁶ Galula, 31-33.

⁹⁷ Galula, 32-33.

According to Galula, numerical strength is calculated in relation to the size of the population. This is because there is not a clear enemy, no clear fronts, and no part of the population can be abandoned for a long time. He states that that 10:1 or 20:1 population related to armed forces, depending on concrete circumstances, is a reasonable ratio for a successful counterinsurgency operation. Given the population of Transnistria alone - 517,963 (2012 estimated)⁹⁸, the size of Moldova's armed forces should be 30–50,000 soldiers in order to efficiently control them. This means that 30,000 soldiers represents the number that would give the Republic of Moldova sufficient force to deter an insurgency. However, this number is calculated only in regard to the number of Transnistria population. If the Russian forces, the Transnistrian Army, the Gagauz and the Russian minorities are added, the number of Moldova's armed forces should be significantly higher than 30,000 soldiers.

FM 3-24 recommends a slightly better ratio—1:40.⁹⁹ However, this ratio is calculated for US forces fighting insurgencies OCONUS. Due to the fact that the Republic of Moldova's armed forces do not have the same equipment, weapons, training, experience, 1:40 ration may be very restrictive for the Republic of Moldova. Galula's recommendation appears to be more suitable for Moldovan armed forces. Therefore, a 30,000 soldiers armed forces would be an absolute minimum to control the Transnistria territory only, without taking into consideration all the other forces listed above.

⁹⁸ Project Gutenberg Self-Publishing Press, "Demographics of Transnistria," accessed February 16, 2016, http://www.gutenberg.us/articles/demographics_of_transnistria.

⁹⁹ US Department of the Army, FM 3-24 MCWP 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 2006), 1-13.

Another factor affecting the armed forces is their composition. David Galula's theory states that an insurgency war is primarily a war of infantry and that a less sophisticated counterinsurgent forces is more capable.¹⁰⁰ According to this criterion, the composition of the Moldovan Forces is an advantage because its forces are primarily motorized infantry and are not sophisticated. However, Galula mentions that a country facing an insurgency needs aviation and other enablers. Consequently, it is hard to give a precise appreciation whether or not Moldova's armed forces meet the criteria. Moreover, because of Moldova's small population, conscripts make up a high percentage of the armed forces. It means that conscription may affect the overall performance of these units, especially in counterinsurgent operations. Therefore, the composition of the armed forces is only partially a strength for the Republic of Moldova.

The next factor is the feeling of the individual soldier toward the insurgent cause and toward the counterinsurgent regime. According to Galula, at some point the counterinsurgent will have to mobilize in order to conduct operations. This is a vulnerable point and soldiers that are sympathetic to the insurgent's cause may undermine the performance of the army.¹⁰¹ The Republic of Moldova does a very good job in integrating all its citizens, to include minorities. Consequently, there is a risk of recruiting supporters or sympathizers of potential insurgents, mostly among conscripts. However, the majority of the army officers, NCOs, and soldiers are educated in a

¹⁰⁰ Galula, 32.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 33.

patriotic manner. Their feeling towards a potential insurgency cause will be non-supportive; this is an advantage for the Republic of Moldova.

The last factor that has an impact on the performance of the armed forces in a counterinsurgent operation is the time lapse before intervention.¹⁰² According to the theory, less time elapsed brings better results. David Galula states that there is a delay in employing armed forces if compared to conventional operations. In Moldova's situation, the lack of political consensus may trigger a significant delay in decision making, which will negatively affect potential operations.

The police

According to David Galula, the police are the eyes and the arm of the government in maintaining the internal order and is a very important factor especially in the early stages of an insurgency. He further states that the efficiency of the police depend on four factors:¹⁰³

1. Numerical strength;
2. The competency of their members;
3. Police loyalty towards the government;
4. The backing police gets from other branches of the government, particularly the judicial system.

The General Police Inspectorate is subordinate to the Moldovan Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) which is the central executive authority of the Republic of

¹⁰² Galula, 33.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Moldova responsible for law enforcement and crime prevention. At present, the MIA of the Republic of Moldova is an armed law enforcement body tasked with protecting life, health, people's rights and freedoms against criminal attacks and offences.¹⁰⁴ Within the MIA there are also the Carabineer who guard public order and guard certain facilities, the Border Police, the Civil Protection and Exceptional Situations Service, the Special Purpose Brigade “*Fulger*,” and other services/subdivisions.¹⁰⁵ The overall number of the police, the internal troops, and the carabineer troops is approximately 12 000.¹⁰⁶ This force of 12,000 cannot be entirely utilized against the Russian hybrid threat because some of these policemen/carabineer will have to execute their core missions in Moldova proper at the same time. Even if all of these police forces were added to the National Army strength, it is still short of 30 000 which is the absolute minimum number necessary to successfully oppose a potential insurgency as part of an overall Russian hybrid threat in accordance with Galula’s ratio of the population to the armed forces.

The second factor, the competency of the police, is an advantage for the Republic of Moldova because the MIA, like the MOD have a standardized and rigorous education process. Numerous officers attend education in foreign countries.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, all the MIA subdivisions conduct day to day activities somehow related to a potential Russian

¹⁰⁴ OSCE, “Country Profiles of Participating and Partner States: Moldova,” accessed March 15, 2016, http://polis.osce.org/countries/details?item_id=34.

¹⁰⁵ Ministry of Interior, “Subordinated Institutions,” accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.mai.gov.md/ro/structura/institutii-subordonate>.

¹⁰⁶ OSCE, “Country Profiles of Participating and Partner States: Moldova.”

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

hybrid threat. The only limiting factor in the police's competence could be the lack of necessary resources and logistical support.

The next factor is the police loyalty towards the government. Same as the MOD, the MIA does not discriminate minorities, which means that there may individuals within the organization supportive to potential Russian activities. However, the majority of police are loyal to the government. They demonstrated it during the Transnistria War in 1992 and during their day to day activities.

The last factor, judicial backing of police, is hard to analyze during peace-time. Ideally, the judicial system should be transparent and equal for every citizen. However, given the fact that in 2014 Moldova dropped to 103rd place in the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI), scoring 35 out of 100,¹⁰⁸ implies that there may be problems in regard of a transparent and equal judiciary. Moreover, the Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer indicates that 71 percent of Moldovans consider corruption a very serious problem, while 80 percent of Moldovan citizens believe that the most corrupt institution is the judiciary.¹⁰⁹ It is obvious that whenever the national security is at stake, these indicators will probably change. However, as of now these indicators should be a significant concern for people responsible for the national security.

Consequently, the military (MOD and MIA) variable present both advantages and disadvantages for opposing a potential Russian hybrid threat. The main advantages are

¹⁰⁸ GlobalSecurity, "Moldova-Corruption," accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/md-corruption.htm>.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

the personnel because of the education system, competence, loyalty to the Republic of Moldova; the experience from the Transnistria War, and the relatively light, unsophisticated nature of the forces which allows them more flexibility. The main disadvantages are lack of proper funding for both MOD and MIA, lack of recent combat experience other than Transnistria War in 1992, severe under manning, potential members which are not supportive to the government, and lack of appropriate equipment. Ukraine's war with Russia proved that if equipment and weapon systems are outdated, theory is defeated by reality.¹¹⁰

Unfortunately, the disadvantages that the armed forces of the Republic of Moldova face could have a significant negative impact in the event of a Russian hybrid threat. Both the army and the police are outnumbered and severely underfunded. Some Eastern European countries which have significant Russian minorities but are members of NATO and have a 2 percent of GDP (or close) funding for their armies, display significant concerns when discussing potential opposition to a Russian hybrid threat. The Republic of Moldova, with its current funding and manning of its armed forces is even more vulnerable to a potential Russian hybrid threat.

¹¹⁰ Phillip A. Karber, "Draft Lessons Learned from the Russo-Ukrainian War," The Potomac Foundation, July 6, 2015, accessed February 11, 2016, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/274009061/Lessons-Learned-From-the-Russo-Ukraine-War>, 43.

The economic variable

The Republic of Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe.¹¹¹ Although the overall economic impact on Moldova as a country is beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that a poor economic situation directly and indirectly impacts the national security for many reasons. Both the National Security Concept and the National Security Strategy identify the economy as a threat to the national security.¹¹² A poor economy limits resource allocation to the security sector, amplifies ethnic divergences, makes Moldova vulnerable to external economic manipulation, cause politicians to focus primarily on economic and social issues at the expense of the security sector, encourages corruption, and adversely impacts education. The agriculture sector accounts for about 30 percent of the GDP while remittance account for approximately 25 percent of the GDP.¹¹³ Agricultural products, and wine are the main exports. The Russian Federation is the largest market for Moldova agricultural products and also the primary destination for Moldova labor force that seeks job opportunities abroad.¹¹⁴

Starting in 2009 the Republic of Moldova had a good economic forecast, with improved fiscal and exchange rate policy. Moldova managed to experience the highest

¹¹¹ The World Bank, “Overview: Moldova,” Last updated January 21, 2015, accessed March 16, 2016. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/moldova/overview>.

¹¹² Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, *National Security Concept (2008)*.

¹¹³ NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

¹¹⁴ Coface, “Risk Assessment: Republic of Moldova,” accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.coface.com/Economic-Studies-and-Country-Risks/Moldova-Republic-of>.

cumulative GDP growth in the region since 2007.¹¹⁵ The national poverty and extreme poverty rates, fell from 30.2 percent and 4.5 percent in 2006 to 16.6 percent and 0.6 percent respectively in 2012, making Moldova one of the world’s top performers in terms of poverty reduction.¹¹⁶

The economic indicators in the table below give some insight into the trends of Moldova’s levels of social and economic development by year, starting with 2005.

Table 2. Economic indicators for Moldova 2005-2014

		2005	2006	2013	2014
Moldova	GNI per capita, PPP (current international \$)	3,310.0	3,580.0	5,200.0	5,500.0
Moldova	Population, total (in millions)	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6
Moldova	GDP at market prices (current US\$)	2,988,338,439.3	3,408,272,498.1	7,985,349,731.5	7,962,423,551.5
Moldova	GDP growth (annual %)	7.5	4.8	9.4	4.6
Moldova	Life expectancy at birth, total (years)	67.9	68.0	68.8	

Source: The World Bank, “Overview: Moldova,” Last updated January 21, 2015, accessed March 16, 2016. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/moldova/overview>.

However, large numbers of Moldovans continue to work abroad, to include in Russia. The remittance-based consumption and credit expansion remained a significant driver for the economy.¹¹⁷ Approximately 25 percent of Moldova’s GDP comes from

¹¹⁵ The World Bank, “Overview: Moldova,” Last updated January 21, 2015, accessed March 16, 2016. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/moldova/overview>.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Economic Freedom, “Moldova: 2016 index,” accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/moldova>.

remittances. Moldova also depends heavy on weather conditions and export options. This is because the agricultural sector is heavily affected during droughts due to lack of appropriate irrigation system.

In June 2014 the Republic of Moldova signed an Association Agreement with the European Union. This agreement include Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) settlements.¹¹⁸ It opened new opportunities for export and therefore diversified Moldova's opportunities to export its products, especially the agricultural products. Consequently, exports to the EU are increasing. However, the Russian Federation is still the number one country for Moldova's import and export.¹¹⁹ Due to droughts, weak economic activity of major economic partners, and Russian trade restrictions, the GDP decreased from 9.4 percent in 2013 to 4.7 percent at the end of 2014.¹²⁰ The GDP decrease was mostly influenced by Russian trade restrictions. On several occasions, Russia stopped imports from the Republic of Moldova. It usually poses restriction on those products that Moldova depends most on - wine and agricultural products. Therefore, Russia can use its economic instrument of national power to intimidate Moldova; and Russia did use it. A good example was the Russian embargo on Moldova wine in September 2006 followed by similar actions in the recent years. The energy sector is another leverage that Russia uses to influence Moldova. It is effective because Moldova has a high dependency on Russian energy, especially on natural gas.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Gvosdev and Marsh, 180.

¹²⁰ The World Bank, "Overview: Moldova."

Consequently, the main ways that Russia can impact Moldova's economy is by reducing imports from Moldova, by not accepting, or limiting Moldovan workforce, and by manipulating the energy dominance.

There are many reasons that ex-Soviet countries tend to economically gravitate towards Russia. It is because of the strong economic ties that had been created between the Soviet Republics. The USSR created a common way of doing business, similar bureaucracy, and a common business language.¹²¹ Furthermore, Russia's investments in Moldova are great (1992-2003, 789 million US dollars).¹²² The Russian Federation is also number one country for Moldova's import and export.¹²³

Table 3. Moldova Trade by Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Partners

Moldova	First	Second	Third
Export	Russia (25.3%)	Romania (13%)	Italy (10%)
Import	Russia (20.5%)	Ukraine (15.8%)	Romania (15%)

Source: Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE/CQ Press, 2014), 169.

¹²¹ Gvosdev and Marsh, 180.

¹²² Ibid., 181.

¹²³ Ibid., 180.

All these factors keep Russia on top of the economic ladder with respect to the Republic of Moldova.¹²⁴ This means that Russia can significantly impact the economy of Moldova, with relatively low consequences for itself. This is because the exports of Moldovan agricultural products to Russia, although represent a big percentage of Moldova's exports, do not make a significant percentage of overall Russian imports. Moreover, Moldovans do not make up a significant portion of labor force for Russia, even though the number represents approximately 40 percent of Moldovans working abroad. Consequently, Russia can impact both remittances from guest workers and exports. If Russia applies restrictions on Moldova's agricultural products, then Moldova's exports will decrease. If Russia denies or hinders access of Moldovan citizens to Russia, the remittance will significantly decrease.

The Republic of Moldova has tried to maintain its economic ties with the former Soviet republics. On December 21, 1991 at Almaty in Kazakhstan, Moldova became part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).¹²⁵ Initially the CIS promised good results, especially in the economic domain. Nevertheless, the CIS proved itself a relatively ineffective organization mainly because of Russian dominance of it. Some analysts also consider the CIS a Russian soft power approach to the ex-Soviet republics.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Ibid. 180.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 164.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 169.

The other way Russia can significantly impact Moldova's economy is through the energy sector. The Republic of Moldova is highly dependent on Russian energy because it imports most of energy products from Russia.¹²⁷ On several occasions Russia has already manipulated Moldova's energy sector. One example was in January 2006 when Gazprom interrupted gas supply to Moldova after a price dispute and reopened the supply only after the Republic of Moldova agreed to pay US\$3/thousand cubic feet, an increase from the US\$2/thousand cubic feet paid previously.¹²⁸

Furthermore, Moldova accumulates debt to the Russian "Gazprom" because of Transnistria. While the Russian Federation transits gas to Transnistria, the separatist region does not pay the gas bill. Consequently, the Russian Federation charges Moldova for the gas.¹²⁹ That way, Moldova has accumulated over \$6 billion "Transnistria debt" which is almost half of Moldova's GDP.¹³⁰

The Republic of Moldova tried to develop alternatives to Russian energy. Thus, Moldova granted oil and gas development concessions to the American company Redeco Energy Inc. in 1995.¹³¹ Redeco finished test drilling in 1999. Their estimates showed a

¹²⁷ NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Michael Ruhle and Julijus Grubliauskas, "Energy as a Tool of Hybrid Warfare" (Research Paper, no. 113, NATO Defense College, April 2015), 5, accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=803>.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

production potential of 100,000 tons a year for oil and five million cubic meters a year for gas.¹³² That is insignificant for the energy needs of the Republic of Moldova.

It is important to mention that the Moldova government, with the support of Romania and the EU made a great effort to address Moldova's energy dependency. With European and Romanian funds, Moldova and Romania started the construction of the Iasi-Ungheni gas pipeline. The purpose of the pipeline was to free Moldova from dependence on the Russian gas. The total capacity of the pipeline is 1.5 billion cubic meters.¹³³ If extended to the capital city, Chisinau, where 50-60 percent of the gas consumption occurs, this pipeline could support all the Moldova's gas consumption. The Moldova authorities intend to extend the pipeline. This will significantly decrease the Russian Federation gas monopoly in Moldova. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) conducted a feasibility analysis of the project and the result was positive.¹³⁴ The work on the pipeline extension from Ungheni to Chisinau is planned to start in 2016.

The Republic of Moldova generates little electricity. It is almost entirely dependent on Ukraine and the single main generation source, *Cuciurgani-Moldavskaya GRES* power plant located in Transnistria. Any attempt to create competition on the

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Cross Border Cooperation, "Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova. Interconnection Gas Pipelines," March 27, 2015, accessed March 16, 2016, [http://www.ceer.eu/portal/page/portal/EER_HOME/EER_INTERNATIONAL/CEER_Eastern_Partnership/4th_EaP_Workshop/WD/Field%20Trip_MEPIU%20Information%20for%20270315%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.ceer.eu/portal/page/portal/EER_HOME/EER_INTERNATIONAL/CEER_Eastern_Partnership/4th_EaP_Workshop/WD/Field%20Trip_MEPIU%20Information%20for%20270315%20(2).pdf).

¹³⁴ Moldpres, "Extending Iasi-Chisinau pipeline," accessed March 16, 2016, <http://www.moldpres.md/en/news/2016/02/04/16000953>.

wholesale market is impossible in the absence of access to the Ukrainian and Romanian market.¹³⁵ In 2001, the International Financial Corporation (IFC) and the EBRD each lent US\$25 million to increase the efficiency and expand the current electricity distribution networks within Moldova.¹³⁶

In Ukraine, the Russian Federation employed a combination of conventional, unconventional, and strategic communication tools. However, it also integrated the energy into its overall strategy.¹³⁷ This perfectly matches with what a hybrid threat should do, according to the TC 7-100 “hybrid threat.” This publication states that “a hybrid threat uses a variety of conventional, unconventional, criminal tactics in order to create multiple dilemmas and cause the counterinsurgent to act on multiples lines of effort and lines of operation simultaneously.”¹³⁸ It is highly probable that it will be part of the hybrid threat for the next target, if Russia decides to attack. Energy was a far more important part of the overall Russian hybrid threat in Ukraine than it was believed.¹³⁹ It is important that Moldova’s authorities not only realize this problem, but also start addressing it. However, as long as the energy sector is monopolized by Russia, the

¹³⁵ Energy Community, “Moldova Electricity,” accessed March 16, 2016, https://www.energy-community.org/portal/page/portal/ENC_HOME/AREAS_OF_WORK/Implementation/Moldova/Electricity

¹³⁶ NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

¹³⁷ Ruhle and Grubliauskas, 1.

¹³⁸ US Department of the Army, TC 7-100, *Hybrid Threat*, 1-1 – 1-2.

¹³⁹ Ruhle and Grubliauskas, 1-2.

Republic of Moldova is highly vulnerable to Russian influence in the energy sector as part of a larger Russian hybrid threat.

According to the 2016 index of Economic Freedom estimation, “the Republic of Moldova’s excessive economic dependence on Russia threatens its sovereignty.”¹⁴⁰ This is a statement that is not made very often by economic analysts. The concern of security policy makers should be even larger; and perhaps it is. Key economic challenges comprise fighting corruption, improving the investment climate, removing obstacles for exporters, ensure energy security, and developing a sound financial sector.¹⁴¹ The Moldovan economy needs diversification. Relying mainly on agriculture, wine industries, and remittances from abroad makes Moldova economically vulnerable to Russia. It is heavily dependent on the size of harvest and it is also susceptible to external influences like the Russian embargos. Moreover, David Galula considers that an underdeveloped country is much more vulnerable to insurgency.¹⁴² This appears to be valid for the Republic of Moldova.

Perhaps the US could positively influence the economic issues of the Republic of Moldova and both the US and the EU do assist Moldova. However, analyst Saul Cohen considers that an exaggerated involvement of the United States in the Russian influenced Eurasia would cause “a serious threat to the stability of the geopolitical system.”¹⁴³ If this

¹⁴⁰ Economic Freedom.

¹⁴¹ The World Bank, “Overview: Moldova.”

¹⁴² Galula, 38.

¹⁴³ Gvosdev and Marsh, 187.

idea is true, than it is another indicator that the Republic of Moldova should diversify its economy, develop and rely primarily on its own strengths rather than waiting for significant external support.

Consequently, the Republic of Moldova's economic variable demonstrates that Moldova has significant economic dependence on the Russian Federation, especially in the energy sector. This, coupled with the fact that Russia skillfully uses the economic instrument of national power to threaten and influence its neighbors, decreases Moldova's chances to successfully oppose a hybrid threat. Therefore, the Republic of Moldova is vulnerable to a potential Russian hybrid threat from an economic perspective.

The social variable

Moldova's complex history is reflected in the social variable and further aggravated by the poor economic situation. Due to this complexity, each side, pro-West and pro-East, blames the other for the poor economic situation. However, as described under the economic variable, a big part of the economic problem is fostered by the corruption and a lack of political consensus. Although the social variable can be analyzed using a variety of factors, the most significant factors that lead to social issues appear to be the historical/ethnic differences and the different foreign vectors desired, European Union versus Russia.

Throughout history both Russia and the Soviet Union have realized that at some point Moldova could try to reunify with Romania, and therefore tried to instill Romano-phobia among the Moldovan population. This Romano-phobia was cultivated in Moldova throughout centuries, during the "Russification" of the region. During the "Russification" Russian/Soviet authorities deported parts of their population to neighboring countries and

convinced them to influence the country's population beliefs about Russian ethnicity, culture, and language, thus increasing Russia's legitimacy in these regions and preventing potential rebellion.¹⁴⁴ This narrative was further expanded in regard to the Gagauz minorities, stating that Moldovans will come to loot and exterminate the Gagauz.¹⁴⁵ Obviously none of it has happened. The ethnic and history issue goes even deeper due to the difference of ethnical roots; Moldovans are Latin while Russians, Bulgarians and Ukrainians are Slavic.

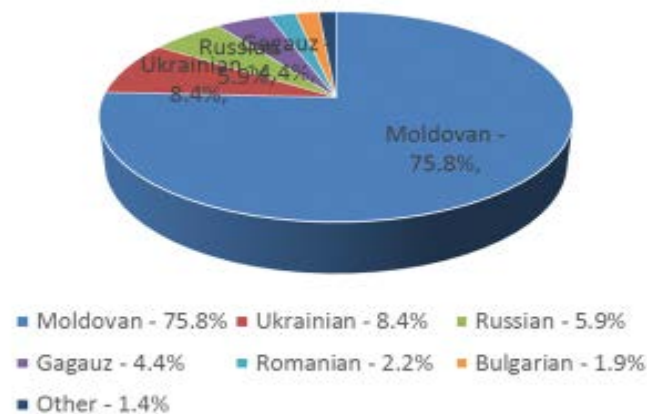


Figure 5. Moldova's Demographics

Source: Indexmundi, "Moldova Demographics Profile 2014," accessed March 16, 2016, http://www.indexmundi.com/moldova/demographics_profile.html.

¹⁴⁴ Gvosdev and Marsh, 158.

¹⁴⁵ Costas, 121.

Moldovans make up the majority of the population. The Russian-speaking minorities, consisting of the Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, and Gagauz make a little over 20 percent. The number of students choosing to study in schools with the Russian Language as the teaching language is also a little above 20 percent,¹⁴⁶ which implies that most of these minorities are more oriented towards Russia than towards the West.

Russia plays the “ethnic card” in the ex-Soviet states to control states’ foreign policies by mobilizing Russia supporting minorities in their interest and by claiming “legitimacy” to defend Russian-speaking population.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, 20 percent of the population may be a good percentage to start playing the “ethnic card.” These portion of the population is significant and can become Russian’s “fifth column,” as an awaiting force of Russians that are loyal to Moscow, not to their country of residence.¹⁴⁸

The above numbers may be enough for Russia to claim its “legacy” in a potential action against Moldova. However, these numbers should not be enough to considerably influence the country’s political vectors. Nevertheless, there are indicators that Russia gets more support in Moldova than the ethnic statistics suggest. One of these indicators is the number of Russia oriented parties within the Parliament. As described within the political variable, the pro-Russian and pro-European Union parties had almost the same

¹⁴⁶ *Statistica Moldovei*, “Education in the Republic of Moldova: Statistical Publication,” accessed March 17, 2016, http://www.statistica.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Educatia/Education08_09.pdf.

¹⁴⁷ Inessa Baban, “The Transnistrian Conflict in the Context of the Ukrainian Crisis” (Research Paper, no. 122, NATO Defense College, December 2015), 10, accessed March 17, 2016, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=881>.

¹⁴⁸ Gvosdev and Marsh, 1218.

number of seats in the Parliament after the 2014 elections. This means that there are numerous Moldovans that support Russia's foreign policy and consider that Moldova should orient towards Russia.

The total number of ethnic Moldovans is relatively high in Moldova. If the seats in the Parliament were distributed proportionally based on the ethnic representation of Moldovans, there would be no political issues at all because 75 percent of the votes is a big number; it could change the Constitution. However, the pro-European parties barely get over 50 percent of votes, despite the fact that there are more than 75 percent of the population is made up of Moldovans. This means two things. First, there are many Moldovans that support a pro-Russian orientation. Second, the fact that the society is almost equally divided may be dangerous because no side has a clear majority. This is confirmed by the Ukraine's situation in Crimea and in Ukraine's South-East, where the population was split almost half and half. At the same time this makes more room for Russia to exercise influence and get more "legitimacy."

According to Daniel Dewit, Russia's most common narrative when conducting hybrid warfare is to protect Russian minorities.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, this is a narrative that Russian media pushes hard to legitimize Russia's aggressive actions. It appears that part of the solution to the Russian non-linear warfare would be the integration of minority groups within the society. Immediately after its' independence in 1991, the Government of the Republic of Moldova failed to successfully integrate the minority groups into the society. Instead, for a short period of time following Moldovan independence, the government

¹⁴⁹ Dewit.

acted aggressively towards minorities. However, during the last two decades Moldova has put forth a great effort to achieve minority integration.

The Republic of Moldova crafted its Constitution so that the rights of minorities are clearly stated. According to Article 10 of the Constitution, the basis of the Republic of Moldova is the unity of all citizens. Furthermore, Moldova guarantees the right of ethnical, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity to all citizens. Minorities are integrated in all aspects of social and political life. Minorities are integrated even within the armed forces. As the Ukrainian crisis demonstrated, Russian minorities tend to not obey orders and may even support the opposing side. Article 13 guarantees the right to use the Russian language and other foreign languages in Moldova. As much as 21 percent of schools teach their students in Russian language.¹⁵⁰ Article 73 gives the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia the right for legal initiative, while according to Article 111, the organic law which regulates the special status of Gagauzia can be modified with the vote of 3/5 of the deputies in the Parliament. Article 110 allows the Parliament to assign Transnistria special forms of autonomy.¹⁵¹ However, as mentioned before, the negotiating sides could not reach a solution yet.

All the strategic documents and political parties' programs also opt for equality and rights for minorities and all of them identify the peaceful solution to the Transnistrian conflict as their way to solve the problem. Consequently, at least on paper, there is no

¹⁵⁰ *Statistica Moldovei*.

¹⁵¹ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, "*Constitutia Republicii Moldova*," accessed February 6, 2016, http://lex.justice.md/document_rom.php?id=44B9F30E:7AC17731.

intention to oppress any minorities. Indeed, the Republic of Moldova has made great effort to integrate minorities while preserving their ethnic and linguistic identities. Moreover, Moldova strives to become part of the European Union. This implies that Moldova will have to respect all ethnic minorities according to European standards.

Despite the efforts of Moldova towards accepting diversity, there has been no significant change in the desires of minorities. Perhaps the integration strategy is wrong or that the minorities that do not want to integrate. It may also be that Russia needs exactly this type of situation so that it can use these minorities whenever necessary. If all minorities were integrated, the Russian Federation would lose its “ethnic card.” The more time passes, the more difficult will it be to solve the problem. In Transnistria, for example, a new generation has come to adulthood and been educated under the Transnistrian ideology that considers Moldova their enemy.¹⁵² The best scenario for Moldova and for the West is the Europeanization of Moldova, which does not necessarily mean integration in the EU in the very near future.¹⁵³ This would be a situation when all the minorities to include those from the Transnistria region would want to be integrated into Europe in order to have a better life. However, given the current economic situation in Moldova it appears that minorities do not have many incentives to do so.

Consequently, the Republic of Moldova has a highly divided and polarized society. Authorities try to address the ethnical and social problems by assuring all minorities the necessary rights. However, it is the poor economic situation, the

¹⁵² Costas, 530.

¹⁵³ Baban, 11.

corruption, the social discontent with the authorities, and the political polarization described above, that negatively influence the social situation in Moldova. All these facts, coupled with the potential usage of the Russian “ethnic card” can bring a considerable negative impact on Moldova. The social variable makes Moldova vulnerable to a potential Russian hybrid threat. Along with the causes analyzed above, another factor that exacerbates social polarization is Russia’s use of media in the Republic of Moldova.

The information variable

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, Article 34, all citizens have access to information, the media must present correct information, while authorities must ensure that this occurs.¹⁵⁴ The population’s access to information is generally achieved through television, radio, print, and internet media. Television is the most popular source of information for Moldovans. It is followed by the internet and radio. There are approximately 64 television channels—including five with national coverage. There are 57 radio stations, and 400 print publications.¹⁵⁵

TC 7-100 describes the media as an element of information warfare, which is conducted at all stages of an operation, even during peacetime, and the overall idea is to “win the battle of the story.”¹⁵⁶ As the Transnistria War demonstrated, the Republic of Moldova lost the “battle of the story” in 1992. It may have happened due to political

¹⁵⁴ Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, “*Constitutia Republicii Moldova*.”

¹⁵⁵ Freedom House, “Freedom of the Press: Moldova,” last modified 2015, accessed March 18, 2016, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/moldova>.

¹⁵⁶ US Department of the Army, TC 7-100, *Hybrid Threat*, 3-5.

reasons; however general Costas mentions that during the Transnistria War, the Moldovan press was hesitant to describe what was happening in Transnistria, while the Russian press was conducting very efficient and effective propaganda. Despite the small size of the country, the Moldovan population was not completely aware of the situation that was developing on the Nistru River. Conversely, the Russian media channels were broadcasting the events very actively, presenting an aggressor's narrative for Moldova but without mentioning much about the involvement of the 14th Soviet Army.¹⁵⁷ Moldovans were portrayed as oppressors while the separatists as defenders of their families, territory, and civil rights. A more recent example was Ukraine. In this case, same as in Transnistria in 1992, Russia made a huge effort to give its own version of the events. The dominance of the pro-Russian media was especially visible within the Republic of Moldova during the Ukrainian conflict.¹⁵⁸

According to some sources, the Russian Federation has been conducting an information war in Moldova since early 2015.¹⁵⁹ Russian media tries to influence the population in favor of the pro-Russian parties. If Russian media was impartial, its broadcast in Moldova would not be a security concern. However, Vladimir Putin leads Russia today using a “soft authoritarianism.”¹⁶⁰ This means that most of Russian media is censored. Russian channels in the Republic of Moldova broadcast programs and

¹⁵⁷ Costas, 476.

¹⁵⁸ Cristina Leva, “Europe and Eurasia Media Sustainability Index 2015,” accessed March 18, 2016, <https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/2015-msi-moldova.pdf>.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Gvosdev and Marsh, 49.

messages which legitimize Russian actions. These channels try to influence both Russian minorities and Soviet-nostalgic Moldovans target audiences by displaying specific programs, Soviet patriotic movies, and shows.

Another important means to convey information is the internet and social media. In 2014, approximately 47 percent of the Moldovan population had internet access. Social media is very popular, especially Facebook and the Russian site *Odnoklassniki*.¹⁶¹ A large part of the population uses *Odnoklassniki* versus Facebook. The main reason is the language. While English language is not very popular outside Chisinau, the vast majority of people speak Russian. Therefore, *Odnoklassniki* is accessible to most of the population and as social media gets more and more popular, more Moldovans are exposed to influence by Russian social media. *Odnoklassniki*, like the other Russian media appears to be censored. A specific example was when the *Odnoklassniki* administration removed all articles that were criticizing Vladimir Putin. The site's administration representative Ilia Grabovskii explained that the system itself removed all posts critiquing president Putin because there were too many complaints that those posts did not represent reality.¹⁶²

It is important to mention that the Moldovan government tries to address the situation. The Audiovisual Coordinating Council (CCA) registered many complaints about suspect cases; one of them being the heavy support of Russian media to the

¹⁶¹ Freedom House, "Freedom of the Press: Moldova."

¹⁶² Yugopolis, "*Одноклассники объяснили удаление постов с критикой Путина*," last modified June 23, 2014, accessed March 19, 2016, <http://www.yugopolis.ru/news/politics/2014/06/23/69564/vladimir-putin-odnoklassniki-internet-cenzura-zaprety-propaganda>.

Socialist Party (PSRM) before and during the elections in 2014.¹⁶³ The CCA on several occasions issued warnings and fines to different television channels for not being balanced in their coverage and for violating the principles of pluralism. The council also said that Russian channels distorted the events in Ukraine.¹⁶⁴ In July 2014 the CCA banned the Russian channel “Rossiya 24” for a period of six months.¹⁶⁵ However, the fact that this ban coincided with the pre electoral and electoral period brings up suspicions about whether the decision to enact the ban was related to the national security or it was just a CCA decision influenced by one political party to affect another political party. If the political reason was the case, than it may affect the national security in the future. If in the near future there will be a Russia oriented party, or coalition, with a majority, the pro-Russian party may be able to influence CCA’s decisions on what channels to ban and what information to broadcast.

The freedom of media in Transnistria is far from generally accepted standards, both for Transnistria owned media and for private owned media in the region.¹⁶⁶ All media is limited to regional sources and for political reasons there is no media from Moldova broadcasted nor printed in Transnistria.¹⁶⁷ News concerning European

¹⁶³ Freedom House, “Freedom in the world: Moldova.”

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Leva.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

integration is presented in a distorted way, NGO activities, and external assistance are not broadcasted.¹⁶⁸

In the Găgăuz autonomous region the situation is a little better. National media broadcasts in the region and also people have access to media in the Gagauz language. Moreover, national television channels have many programs, including news in minority languages. In October 2014, the national authorities further addressed the situation by nullifying fees for accessing information from the companies registered in Moldova.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the local, Gagauz authorities have tried to get more authority over the media. In October 2015, they debated a law concerning the broadcasting in the Gagauz autonomous region, which was not consistent with national regulations.¹⁷⁰ Although the situation is not as bad as in Transnistria, there is still a tendency to have fewer broadcasts in the Romanian language and more in minorities' languages.

Language, foreign policy preferences, and political involvement in media are the threats to media plurality. The pro-Western media is generally also pro-Romania while the pro-Russian media is generally anti-West. The pro-Russian channels outnumber the pro-Romanian channels throughout the country.¹⁷¹ This is an indicator that population is exposed to a higher degree to pro-Russian channels. Moreover, news presented in

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

minority languages generally has a more pro-Russia view when describing sensitive Moldova topics, like the European Integration or the Ukrainian crisis.¹⁷²

Russia's activities within the Republic of Moldova media are relatively controlled. However, both the CCA and the people consider that political leaders and oligarchs control a significant portion of media channels.¹⁷³ Therefore, media remains a vulnerable aspect. In case there will be a pro-Russian party or coalition, the volume of the Russian broadcasting may increase. Given the fact that much of Moldova's population speaks the Russian language, it is relatively easy for Russia to push its narratives in Moldova.

The Moldovan population has a high level of trust in mass media. According to 2009 surveys, 51.3 percent of the population trusted media. Only the church that has a higher percentage (79.8 percent) of population trust.¹⁷⁴ This shows that mass-media is a very efficient means of influencing people, when every family has access to at least one type of media. This influence would be a very good thing in a case when media was not controlled by politicians or oligarchs. However, in Moldova's situation, it may not be a positive thing because media may feed information that does not necessarily represent a certain situation objectively.

David Galula mentions in the "Prerequisites for a successful insurgency" paragraph of his theory that the outside support that a nation state gives to the insurgent

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Freedom House, "Freedom in the world: Moldova."

¹⁷⁴ Diana Lungu, "Media Landscapes: Moldova," European Journalism Center, accessed March 18, 2016, http://ejc.net/media_landscapes/moldova.

has an important impact on the success of the insurgency. This outside support can have several forms—moral support, political support, technical support, financial support, and military support. He considers that the moral support is expressed by public opinion and provided through media communications.¹⁷⁵ In the case of the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation has provided moral support to the separatists from Transnistria and to the Gagauz ever since Moldova became independent. Whether or not Russia has a further intent to activate an insurgency is hard to predict; however, from the media perspective the conditions appear to be set.

The Republic of Moldova has made strong efforts to limit Russia's ability to manipulate the population using media, like perspectives on the Ukrainian conflict and European integrations. In September 2014, the Supreme Court upheld the CCA's 2013 decision to impose on TV channels a quota of at least 30 percent of their time with Moldovan's programs and half of the primetime hours with programs in Romanian language.¹⁷⁶ However, the fact that there are a significant number of Russian retranslating outlets, the delay of Moldovan authorities in stopping distorted information from being broadcasted, coupled with the population's trust in a politically controlled media imply that the pro-Russian messages will get to the targeted audiences, at least in the initial stages of a hybrid threat, when it is most important. Therefore, the current situation in the informational domain gravitates towards supporting Russian hybrid threats. The informational variable makes Moldova vulnerable to a potential Russian hybrid threat.

¹⁷⁵ Galula, 39.

¹⁷⁶ Freedom House, "Freedom of the Press: Moldova."

The infrastructure variable

The elements of the infrastructure variable that may have an impact on potential operations involving a Russian hybrid threat are the transportation and communication infrastructure. The industrial infrastructure analysis is beyond the scope of this research. Other than the limited economic influence in the region, it does not have a significant impact on potential hybrid operations. However, it is worth mentioning that a significant part of the industrial infrastructure was located in the Transnistria region. As much as 90 percent of Moldova's energy output facilities in 1992 were located in the Transnistria region.¹⁷⁷ The industrial infrastructure appears to not influence as much with regards to potential Russian hybrid operations as the transportation and the communication infrastructure does.

The Republic of Moldova currently has eight main airports and several smaller landing/take off airstrips.¹⁷⁸ For the purpose of this paper, two airports are analyzed—the Chisinau International Airport and the Tiraspol Airport in the Transnistria region. The situation that develops at these two airports may have a significant impact on potential Russian hybrid threat operations.

The Chisinau International Airport is the main airport of the Republic of Moldova and has the highest volume of passengers and cargo flow into and from the country. The airport has been part of a lot of controversy during the last couple of years. Following a complicated leasing scheme through offshores companies, the airport was leased to the

¹⁷⁷ NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

¹⁷⁸ Our Airports, "Airports in Moldova," accessed March 16, 2016, <http://ourairports.com/countries/MD/airports.html?sort=popular>.

Russian “Avia Invest” company which presents many suspicions.¹⁷⁹ It is suspicious because five companies from Europe with great experience in airport operations participated in the competition; however the commission chose a Russian company founded only a few days before.¹⁸⁰

It is possible that the arrangement was made with Russian companies because it may be easier to conduct business with companies located in Russia than with companies located in other countries. Even if this is the case, the fact that the airport is de facto controlled by a Russian company may facilitate its use by a potential Russian hybrid threat. Furthermore, most of the aerial traffic in and out of Moldova and the traffic of passengers and cargoes, arrive and depart through this airport. This means that most of these movements will be monitored by the Russian companies. Even if there will be no physical use of the airport, the information about cargo and passenger flow in such a situation will be very important.

Based on the fact that the Russian Federation does not have land access to Moldova, airports become even more valuable. Furthermore, since there is a very limited number of airports in Moldova, the Chisinau International Airport becomes at least very significant for both sides. Therefore, apart from the controversial economic benefits, the fact that a Russian company controls the Chisinau International Airport will be in

¹⁷⁹ *Anticoruptie*, “Off-Shor Airport via Russia,” updated December 11, 2015, accessed March 20, 2016, <http://anticoruptie.md/en/investigations/economic/off-shor-airport-via-russia>.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Moldova's disadvantage in case of a Russian hybrid threat and may seriously impact national security.

The Tiraspol Airport is located near Tiraspol which is the “capital” of the separatist Transnistria region. The airport drew substantial attention even before the Ukrainian crisis. It has a landing/take off strip of 2500 meters.¹⁸¹ This allows both fighter and cargo aircraft to take off or land into Transnistria. The Russian Federation started repairing the airport in 2012 pretending it needs the airport to evacuate the eight remaining Russian helicopters. Currently there are several new structures and Russian flight personnel located on the airport.¹⁸²

It may be that Russia's intentions are to evacuate the old helicopters in order to fulfill its commitments from the Istanbul OSCE summit. However, the current situation in Ukraine brings up doubts that the Russian Federation has made such a prioritization and decided to invest money in the airport in order to evacuate unserviceable helicopters instead of evacuating its ammunition from the Colbasna depot. It leads to the assumption that the Russian Federation is preparing the airport for potential military use. This assumption makes even more sense today, when the Russian Federation does not have direct access to Transnistria.

Along with the airports, the road network in Moldova could also impact potential operations conducted by a Russian hybrid threat. Currently the Republic of Moldova has

¹⁸¹ Basarabia Press, “*Aeroportul de la Tiraspol militarizat pana-n dinti*,” last updated March 21, 2016, accessed March 21, 2016, <http://basarabiapress.info/documente-secrete-aeroportul-de-la-tiraspol-militarizat-pana-n-dinti-dodon-si-usatii-coordonati-de-fosti-agenti-kgb/>.

¹⁸² Ibid.

approximately 1156 kilometers of railroad and 9360 kilometers of public roads.¹⁸³ The options to move from one point to another are limited and the width of the roads is usually not enough for movement of large formations. The road infrastructure will affect both the Republic of Moldova and a potential Russian hybrid threat.

The Communication infrastructure becomes important especially during the initial stages of a potential operation conducted by a Russian hybrid threat. The infrastructure is relatively well developed. Communication infrastructure, especially internet and mobile telephone has grown more than 10 times since 2004.¹⁸⁴ Both mobile telephony and internet are easily accessible. For a population of approximately 3.5 million people, there are 4.3 million mobile phone numbers registered.¹⁸⁵ There are two (GSM) Global System for Mobiles carriers in the Republic of Moldova - Orange Moldova and Moldcell, and two (CDMA) Code Division Multiple Access carriers - Unité and Interdnestrcom.¹⁸⁶ The last carrier, Interdnestrcom is the one operating in Transnistria; no other carrier has access to the Transnistria region. It is hard to identify whether or not this is an advantage for potential operations conducted by a hybrid threat or not. However, the infrastructure

¹⁸³ *Biroul National de Statistica*, “*Transportul de Marfuri si Pasageri in 2015*,” last updated January 28, 2016, Accessed March 21, 2016, <http://www.statistica.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=5047>.

¹⁸⁴ Larisa Bugaian, Maria Gheorghita, and Doina Nistor, “Analysis of the Industry Potential in Republic of Moldova,” University of Galati, accessed March 18, 2016, http://www.ann.ugal.ro/eco/Doc2010_2/Bugaian_Gheorghita_Nistor.pdfhttp://www.ann.ugal.ro/eco/Doc2010_2/Bugaian_Gheorghita_Nistor.pdf.

¹⁸⁵ *Biroul National de Statistica*.

¹⁸⁶ Liquesearch, “Communications in Moldova: Mobile telephony,” accessed March 21, 2016, http://www.liquesearch.com/communications_in_moldova/mobile_telephony.

is in place and the probability that elements of the hybrid threat will use it, at least in the initial phases remains high. Overall, the infrastructure variable presents more disadvantages than advantages and makes Moldova vulnerable to a potential Russian hybrid threat.

Implications of Geography

As presented in chapter 2, the Republic of Moldova has borders only with Ukraine and Romania. The Republic of Moldova does not share borders with the Russian Federation. It appeared that during the 2008 war in Georgia and the subsequently 2014 invasion of Ukraine in 2014, Russia inserted troops over the borders with Georgia and Ukraine in order to achieve its goals. Had the Russian Federation not had direct access to these theaters of operation, the results may have been different. Therefore, the lack of direct access to Moldova is a strong advantage for the Republic of Moldova. If Russia ever decides to conduct operations in Moldova and it will need forces that are not currently in Transnistria or anywhere else in Moldova, the Russian troops will have to cross over Ukraine. They will have to secure and use either air, ground, or a combination of lines of communications. Whichever they choose, Russia must pass through or gain the approval of Ukraine, which currently denies transit of its territory. The current conditions lead to the assumption that Ukraine will, most likely, continue to deny Russia's access.

Obviously, the option of a direct violation of the Ukraine's air space, and/or territorial waters could always be on the table. However, it appears that such an option would bring more complexity to the problem set for the Russian Federation. Therefore, the fact that Russia does not have a direct access to Moldova limits Russia's options to

the use of only those forces that are currently deployed in Moldova. This takes off a significant amount of burden from the Republic of Moldova and represents the greatest advantage that Moldova has in relation to a potential Russian hybrid threat.

Conclusion

The PMESII analysis revealed important disadvantages that Moldova has to address in order to secure itself from a potential Russian hybrid threat. The Republic of Moldova's strongest advantage is the lack of common borders with Russia. It implies that if Moldova is willing to secure itself, it is feasible. However this feasibility is only valid if the Republic of Moldova starts taking concrete steps to secure its future. National security is not the mission just for the army and police. It is the responsibility of the whole country. It may be difficult for Moldova to significantly improve its national security due to its poor economic situation.

Greater investments in the security sectors means less money for the social programs and perhaps a stronger, more difficult political confrontation for winning the people's support. This is difficult in a socially and politically polarized country. However, there is no way around it.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of the paper is to determine whether or not the Republic of Moldova can or cannot oppose a potential Russian hybrid threat, given the current situation in the country. This chapter briefly summarizes the findings of the research. It also analyzes what those results mean and what the implications of these results are. Subsequently the chapter describes the unexpected findings, recommendations for further study, with a final conclusion.

The main findings from the previous chapter indicate that the Republic of Moldova is highly vulnerable to a potential Russian hybrid threat. Although there are some advantages, for the most part Moldova has serious disadvantages that could endanger its sovereignty.

The political variable demonstrated that the political situation does not favor a successful opposition of a potential Russian hybrid threat. Instead, it makes Moldova vulnerable and may even facilitate development of a successful insurgency. The strategic documents appear to be outdated and do not emphasize the national security. Even when they do there is no balance among the ends, ways, means, and risk. The political parties that are represented in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova focus extensively on social issues and on winning popular support. Their political programs generally do not emphasize national security aspects.

Furthermore, both the strategic documents and the political parties' programs put a significant reliance on the international community. In light of Russian invasions of

Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 it is safe to assume that Moldova's reliance on international community is flawed. The international community will not fight Moldova's war; and why would they? The Republic of Moldova is a neutral country. It does not provide a significant contribution to the international and regional security.

The strategic documents and the political parties consider that neutrality is Moldova's foundation for national security. Perhaps whoever developed these documents had their reasons; they may have been to try keep Russia calm. However, it is the Russian Federation that currently violates Moldova's neutrality. Neither diminishing relations with Romania, nor the neutrality status helped Moldova to solve the Transnistria problem and persuade Russia to withdraw its forces from Moldova's territory.¹⁸⁷

Ukraine was a neutral county too. Not only was it neutral but it also had a border agreement with Russia. Furthermore, according to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, the Russian Federation, the US and the UK agreed to guarantee Ukraine's integrity in return to Ukraine's nuclear arsenal. None of these helped Ukraine preserve its territorial integrity. Now Ukraine is fighting a bloody war with at very least Russian surraogate force and risks the loss of parts of its country. In Moldova's case, it is debatable whether or not Russia would take action if Moldova renounces its neutrality. However, it is clear to everybody that neutrality is not a security strategy, at least in Moldova's case. On the contrary, extensive reliance on neutrality is a way that generates significant risks for Moldova's national security.

¹⁸⁷ Costas, 532.

Analyzing the political variable through the David Galula's counterinsurgency theory suggests that the current situation in Moldova facilitates a potential insurgency. Consequently, the political variable analysis demonstrates that the Republic of Moldova is highly vulnerable to a potential Russian hybrid aggression.

The military variable is only slightly better. There are some advantages, like education, experience from the 1992 Transnistria War, and the unsophisticated organization of the Army's units. However, the disadvantages are disproportionate. Despite the efforts of the military leadership, the National Army's budget has not increased. Even after the Russian invasion in Ukraine, the National Army's budget remained slightly over 0.3 of GDP. This drives obvious consequences.

Furthermore, David Galula's theory implies that there is a potential for insurgency because Moldova would not have the necessary manpower to address the situation. Both the National Army and the police are undermanned. Their combined forces are barely enough to conduct counterinsurgency operations in Transnistria alone. The strength is below the suggested by Galula 1:20 minimal ratio. The number of forces do not include Moldova's mobilization capability; but they also do not include the regular Russian and Transnistrian forces. Therefore, from the military variable's perspective, the Republic of Moldova is vulnerable to a potential Russian hybrid aggression.

The economic variable examination demonstrates that Russia has significant economic leverages over Moldova. The Russian Federation has repeatedly employed its economic instruments of national power against Moldova and against other countries. The Republic of Moldova is vulnerable because Russia tops the list for both Moldova's exports and imports. Russia is also the country from which Moldova imports natural gas

and other energy resources. Although authorities are trying to solve the energy dependency with the help of Romania and the European Union, Moldova currently remains highly dependent on Russian energy. Furthermore, a significant part of Moldova's GDP comes from revenues from abroad. About 40 percent of those revenues come from Russia. This is yet another part of Russia's economic lever over Moldova. Analysts consider Moldova's economic dependence on Russia as the number one threat for Moldova's national security. Consequently, the Republic of Moldova, from the economic perspective, remains highly vulnerable to a potential Russian hybrid aggression.

The social variable is very complex. It has roots deep into history. "Russification" played a significant role. Moldova also had its faults because it failed to integrate the minorities immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Moldova realized its shortcomings and addressed the situation afterwards but had little success. The 1992 Transnistria War only exacerbated the hatred among the population. A generation has grown up after the war and the more time passes the more this feelings will be entrenched.

Moldovan society is highly polarized. According to the results of 2014 elections, the percentage of the population that opts for the West barely exceeds those who chose the East. This situation is dangerous. If this situation continues to develop in the same direction, the danger of confrontation will be high. It is imperative that the country avoids such an escalation.

The indecisiveness regarding which foreign policy direction, West or East, Moldova should take does not come as a result of minority influence alone. Although

their point of view is important and they “push” it with all available means, it is the Soviet-nostalgic Moldovans that have an even bigger impact. While it is a normal experience to have minorities align with the states from which they draw their ethnicity, it is frustrating that there is a significant part of Moldovans that share or are sympathetic to Russia’s point of view. However, we should ask “why?” after 25 years of independence, after a war fought with Russia and its proxies, and after so much assistance from the West, such a significant Moldovan population chooses the East. The answer may lay in the effectiveness of “Russification;” or maybe the Republic of Moldova has not instilled the necessary level of trust in its citizens; or maybe it is both.

Consequently, the Republic of Moldova is vulnerable, from the social perspective, to a potential Russian hybrid threat. This vulnerability is due in large part to the Russian use of the informational institutions of its national power, which is also described by David Galula as “external support.”

The analysis of the informational variable provides similar results. The amount of Russian or Russia supportive media is high. Their popularity is also high. The population has relatively good access to media, to include the internet. Moreover, the media is rated as number two in population’s trust. This means the population trusts the media and therefore, the degree of persuasion that media can achieve is high. Moldovan authorities try to address the situation. Nevertheless, from the media perspective, the Republic of Moldova remains vulnerable to a potential Russian hybrid threat.

The infrastructure variable has issues as well. The Chisinau International Airport is leased to a Russian company through what the media describe—a procedure that drives suspicion. Authorities are currently investigating the problem. Another problem is the

Tiraspol airfield. The Russian Federation started repairing this airfield by explaining that it needs the airfield to evacuate several old helicopters. There are two problems with this explanation. First, it is unlikely that Ukraine would allow Russian military aircraft to fly through its airspace. Therefore, there should be no such rush for the Russians to repair the landing/take off strip. Second, if Russia's intentions coincide with their reasoning, the question that arises is whether or not those old helicopters are worth the investment. Perhaps Russia has just decided to fulfil its obligation to withdraw its weapons and ammunitions, according to the 1998 Istanbul OSCE summit agreement. In this case it could be less expensive and of more value to start evacuating the ammunition from Colbasna rather than the helicopters. Whichever the case, although the infrastructure variable appears to be neutral, the fact that the International Airport Chisinau has been leased to a Russian company, coupled with the Russian activities on the Tiraspol Airport make Moldova vulnerable to a potential Russian hybrid aggression.

Despite all the vulnerabilities listed above, the Republic of Moldova has a very important advantage—geography. Currently, Moldova has no borders with the Russian Federation. This means that Russia would not be able to support its troops/proxies without transiting Ukraine. Currently, Ukraine does not allow Russian military transit Ukrainian territory and it is unlikely that it will in the future. Therefore, the fact that Russia has no direct access to Moldova represents the highest advantage for Moldova and potentially the biggest problem for Russia in case it decides to conduct a hybrid operation in Moldova. However, if this circumstance changes and Russia connects across Ukraine to Transnistria, than the only major advantage that Moldova has will be negated.

Recommendations for further study

Some of the findings throughout the paper require further study. Even if most of them have already been studied, they may be outdated given the changes in the current strategic environment. There are five main areas that require further study:

1. The division of Moldova's society and potential ways to improve it. It appears that despite significant rights, minorities continue to oppose the pro-European government. Is it because of the external influence or is there something more that Moldova could do for its minorities? Or is it a result of successful "Russification"?
2. How can Moldova overcome the problems identified in this study and how much effort will it require? There may be some areas difficult to improve. However, it is necessary to conduct a thorough study in order to avoid hasty decisions.
3. Can a potential hybrid threat be proactively prevented? If not, why? It appears that there may be possibilities to proactively solve the problems before they exacerbate. If Moldova efficiently addresses its major issues, especially the economic and social issues, it appears that it would be much less susceptible to Russian hybrid threats.
4. In case Moldova cannot successfully oppose the Russian hybrid threat, can it make Russia's operation too costly or cost-inefficient so as to be a deterrent? It is a difficult research question; however it is worth studying because cost may be a significant deterrent for future Russian operations.

5. Conduct case studies on Russia's previous hybrid threats/aggressions in countries like Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and Georgia, in order to identify lessons learned that could be implemented in the Republic of Moldova's situation.

Conclusion

Joseph Stalin stated, "Whoever occupies a territory also imposes his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise."¹⁸⁸ Today, the Russian Federation's operational reach depends on the ability to project a hybrid threat. The Republic of Moldova can oppose a potential Russian hybrid threat *only if* it improves its current situation of all the PMESII variables. There is no mystery about what the Republic of Moldova should do. Although details are sensitive and require expert knowledge, the broad approach to improve Moldova's situation is clear.

The Republic of Moldova should find mechanisms to avoid political impasses. It may require reforms, to include constitutional reforms. There will always be a significant political opposition; and that is not the problem. Parties should find a way to achieve long lasting solutions through compromise; or the political reforms should make it difficult to create political impasses. This will bring political stability, progress and will positively affect the other variables. Ultimately, it will set the conditions for the Government to be able to focus on National Security. Without political consensus or a clear majority in the Parliament, security will less likely be a priority and parties' efforts to win popularity will always prevail. Moldova has to rely less on its neutrality and international partners.

¹⁸⁸ Gvosdev and Marsh, 19.

While it should count on some international support, Moldova will have to primarily rely on its own capabilities. However, this is only possible if all political parties put Moldova's national interests above individual parties' interests.

The military needs more funding. Although it is difficult, given the current economic situation, there is no other alternative. Informing the population about the urgency to increase defense capabilities is vital. A significant increase in funding, coupled with on-going security cooperation programs and international assistance will significantly increase Moldova's defense capabilities. Innovation is crucial; but it cannot be done without political and financial support. Realistic interagency exercises with honest feedback will provide important lessons learned and will bring significant improvements in interoperability.

The economic situation needs a concrete and efficient approach. Equality in opportunities, especially for small and medium businesses must be granted and protected by the state. Corruption must be significantly reduced if not exterminated. This will foster foreign investments. Energy sources need diversification. If the economic situation improves, it will positively affect the other variables, especially the social variable. It will also diminish the effects of Russia's economic instrument of national power as part of the hybrid threat in Moldova. Ultimately it will set the ground for addressing the security situation and will increase Moldova's capabilities to successfully oppose a Russia supported hybrid threat.

The social situation is highly dependent on the political and economic variables. Social vulnerability is also tightly related to the information variable. As Moldova's past experience shows, addressing the social variable separately will have only limited effects.

The integrity and honesty of Political parties in regards to the Constitution and the citizens is crucial in addressing the social issues. This coupled with improvements in the overall economic situation will improve social stability, will increase the “passion” of people, and will ultimately make Moldova capable of successfully opposing a potential Russia supported hybrid threat.

The infrastructure variable, although seem like secondary efforts, require the same levels of attention. The Moldova authorities must objectively investigate the International Airport Chisinau’s “case.”

Authorities should continue to monitor the informational variable, to prevent media usage as an element of Russian hybrid threat. Perhaps it is necessary to dedicate more effort to learning other foreign languages. This will enable people to follow western media as well. Consequently, people will view things from different perspectives. This will ultimately diminish Russia’s propaganda effects and will help mitigate Russia’s influence. Ultimately, all the above actions will increase Moldova’s capabilities to oppose a potential Russia supported hybrid threat.

Finally, the Republic of Moldova should realize that geography, coupled with Ukraine’s denial of Russia’s access to Moldova, constitutes a significant advantage. But Moldova should also understand that this is not sufficient. As mentioned above, there is no mystery about what Moldova should do. The point is that Moldova must actually do it. Moldova appears to be currently vulnerable to a potential Russia supported hybrid threat. The current situation is complicated, dangerous, and requires an immediate whole-of-government approach. The Republic of Moldova can successfully oppose a potential

Russian hybrid threat *only if* it improves its current situation. If the Republic of Moldova desires to secure its future, it must put the nation's will into it. It cannot be otherwise.

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